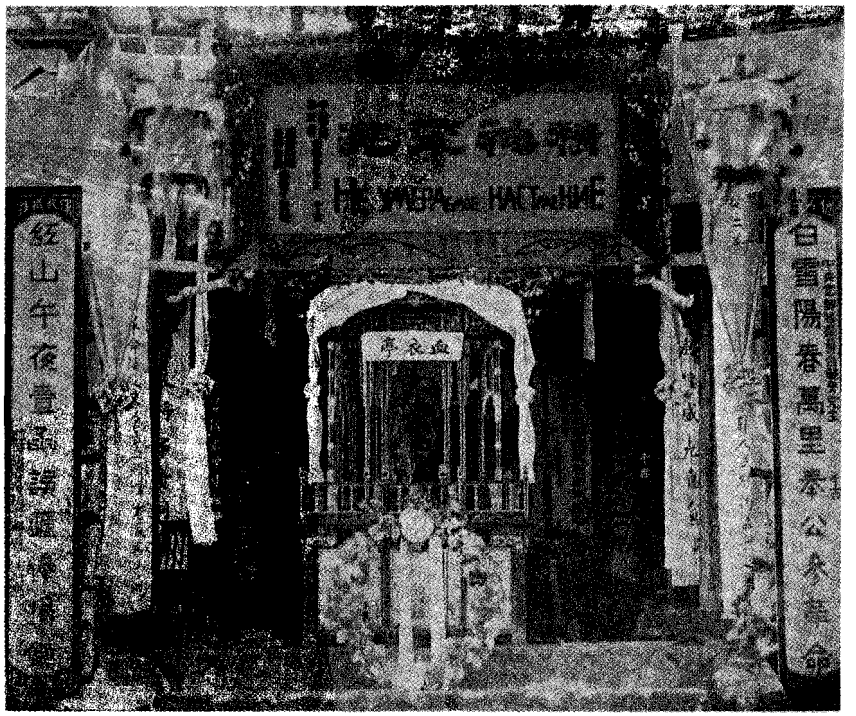

PEI'S MEMORIAL SERVICE. IN THE CENTRE OF THE SHRINE IS PART OF HIS BLOOD-STAINED SWEATER

TURKISTAN TUMULT

by

AITCHEN K. WU

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INTRODUCTION

It is over forty years since Aitchen Wu's *Turkistan Tumult* first appeared. As I then knew the author fairly well and had a small part in the first publication of his book I am glad to play some role in its revival. During the intervening period events in Chinese Turkistan, which is known to the Chinese as Sinkiang (Xinjiang), have attracted little attention in the outside world. Such neglect is doubtless because Sinkiang is far from the centres of power. But the fate of Central Asia continues to be a question of the utmost importance to the governments of China and the Soviet Union, both of whom claim historical precedent to justify sovereignty over their territories in the region. Both are understandably concerned about the disruption caused elsewhere by the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism and fear that it may provoke disaffection amongst the Muslim peoples of Central Asia against their Communist masters.

These considerations suggest the desirability of taking another look at Sinkiang. During the 1930s, the period covered by *Turkistan Tumult*, the province (as it then was) came under Soviet domination. Though it remained formally a part of China it was, nevertheless, effectively cut off from the rest of the country for most of the decade. It was not until 1942, when the Russians were preoccupied with the Battle of Stalingrad, that Sheng Shih-tsai, the Governor of Sinkiang, chose to revert his political allegiance to his rightful masters. The province then assumed a new relationship with the Republic of China. Whereas in the 1930s the Soviet Union had exercised control over a large area of Muslim-populated Chinese territory, China's authority in this far western region is now undisputed. The Russians, however, are deeply embroiled in what appears to be an inconclusive struggle in China's Islamic neighbour, Afghanistan. With these issues in mind a book that throws much light on developments in the Islamic world which have led to the convulsions that we are now witnessing is of great interest.

My first meeting with the author was in Urumchi in the early part of 1933 (Wu uses the old Chinese name of Tihwa for what is now, in pinyin, Urumqi). A party of missionary recruits, of whom I was

one, had travelled from Peking (Beijing) across Inner Mongolia and had arrived in Urumchi on 9 November 1932 as the first snows of winter were falling. We miraculously succeeded in entering a city almost surrounded by rebel forces. Wu and his three companions arrived on Christmas Day having approached the province from the west after a very chilly journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway from Vladivostok. This episode is well described in the book. Our next meeting was in London during my first home leave in 1939. At this time *Turkistan Tumult* was about to be published. We met up again in 1948, also in London, when Wu was working on a further book, *China and the Soviet Union*.

The opening pages of *Turkistan Tumult* give a charming glimpse of Wu's family background in Foochow (Fuzhou) in South China. His was a family of scholars with the coveted distinction of five generations of successful candidates for the degree of *chü-jen* in the civil service examinations. When the boy was four years old his father began tutoring him in the Confucian classics, but the old examination system was abolished before Ai-ch'en was of an age to compete. From this circumstance and the fact that in 1924 Wu was given the responsible job of taking over the Russian Consulate in Hankow (Hankou) and accepting the rendition of the Russian Concession there I assume that he must have been born in about 1890 and that he was therefore in his early forties when I first made his acquaintance.

After expounding the meaning of his name to Western readers, Wu Ai-ch'en goes on: 'if after our journey together you still think of me as "the gentle Wu" it will give me great pleasure'. Having had sufficient association with him to make an estimate of his character I should not say that gentleness was among his outstanding qualities. Even after so many years, I recall quite vividly an occasion when I called on him at his office in Urumchi and to my embarrassment found him engaged in a flaming row with a subordinate. His eyes, always bright and eager, were ablaze, his visage contorted with rage, and his speech like bursts of gun-fire. This was not the urbane Confucian gentleman! Samuel Johnson, writing in the eighteenth century on 'Useful Knowledge and Kindness', spoke of 'that disdain with which scholars are inclined to look on the common business of the World and the unwillingness with which they condescend to learn what is not to be found in any system of philosophy'. Such an observation might also sometimes have been applicable

in twentieth-century China but it was not a charge to be levelled against Wu. To his classical attainments was added an education at Peking's National University in modern subjects of more practical application. He never shirked dirty, unpleasant jobs and he had a genius for involving other people in doing them too. Those of us who were roped in by him to help in the military hospital set up under his Relief Committee knew this only too well.

Wu was a Confucian devoted to the essential Chinese qualities, touched to a degree by the more compassionate Buddhist virtues and not a little influenced by his understanding of the Christian ethic. I never knew him to display the slightest xenophobia or anti-Christian feeling. He belonged to the present and looked to the future — an attitude of mind firmly based upon an understanding of China's long history and her rightful place in the modern world. I recall that on one occasion when I was immersed in language study Wu came into the room and picked up the text I was working on. It was *Sheng Yu (The Sacred Edict)*. 'You shouldn't be studying this,' he said, 'these are all the sayings of the Emperor. China is now a republic.' This un-Chinese directness was one of his attractive qualities. Then, too, there was his impatience, which surfaces again and again in his books, at the time-consuming dinner parties and other social formalities that traditionally attended so much official Chinese intercourse. I do not recall ever having seen Wu wearing the long Chinese gown that was enjoying renewed popularity as a sign of the nationalistic spirit then in the air. He was a dapper fellow, always attired in Western style. I assume that his own nationalism scorned the superficiality of mere sartorial demonstration.

In 1932 Sinkiang must have seemed a singularly unattractive posting for an ambitious young scholar-official. Why, then, did Wu go there? He says that he went as adviser to the Governor, Chin Shu-jen. If that were so it soon became clear that Chin felt himself well able to manage without Wu's advice. To me it appeared that Wu was sent to Sinkiang to enforce Kuomintang authority. For years Sinkiang had shown signs of estrangement from China's central government and the Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) party had never before wielded great influence in the province. The leaders of the young Republic now determined to assert firmer control over this furthest outpost of the Empire to which they were heirs. Wu certainly made his base in the provincial KMT party headquarters.

After 12 April 1933, when Governor Chin Shu-jen was ousted

by a detachment of White Russians impatient at his ineffectual handling of the Muslim Rebellion, Wu came to the fore. He was immediately made Secretary of the Maintenance Committee set up to bring together a provisional successor government. In this capacity he was, he says, 'especially concerned that the correct forms of democratic government should be observed'. He was later appointed provincial Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. The new Governor, the elderly Liu Wen-lung, was soon displaced as the effective ruler by Sheng Shih-tsai, the Military Commander. Himself from Manchuria he could count on the personal loyalty, if not the fighting qualities, of the troops that had been repatriated through Siberia to Sinkiang after being defeated by the Japanese. Although Wu speaks of them with admiration and expresses confidence in them, I remember them as arrogant, overbearing and hard on the locals. When the province was suffering the worst effects of Soviet domination it was easy to see that the men from the North-east were ready instruments of the most oppressive government policies. There is no doubt in my mind that Sheng Shih-tsai started out with the most honest intentions and was entirely worthy of the confidence placed in him by the Maintenance Committee. Wu himself is wise enough to refrain from expressing an opinion upon later developments. He quotes Sir Eric Teichman's *Journey to Turkistan* in which Teichman states that:

> Regarding the situation quite objectively, it is difficult to see what other line Nanking or Sheng Tupan could have adopted at that time. Both were the victims of capricious circumstance and the great distances separating Turkistan from China; while the Soviets, with all the resources and implements of modern warfare, were close at hand.

Teichman had undertaken his journey in 1936 as a representative of the British government, accompanied by the British Consul-General from Kashgar with the aim of meeting the Sinkiang provincial authorities.

One of the most important of Wu's activities in Sinkiang was to undertake a mission to dissuade the rebel leader, Ma Chung-yin, from advancing on Urumchi — which he seemed to be on the point of doing — and to turn his attention instead to the Muslim south of the province. This mission is given full treatment in the book and I only mention it here to draw attention to what was perhaps a weakness in Wu's general approach to affairs. There is no doubt

that to have gone to parley with Ma, whom everybody held to be a brave and determined fighter, but who was also cruel and unpredictable, was an act of the most admirable courage. One may, however, question the success of the mission as an exercise in diplomacy. Wu is apt at other times to describe as brilliant strokes of diplomacy what appear to have been common-sense courses of action clearly dictated by the circumstances. His natural optimism and enthusiasm, whilst commendable qualities, did lead him to simplify complex issues and rob him of caution and subtlety.

It is not clear to me when Wu left Sinkiang as I have no personal recollection of it. The reader may well judge in the light of the skulduggery then endemic to political life in Sinkiang that the short answer may have been 'Just in time to save his skin'! He himself relates how in October 1933 he accompanied Dr Lo Wen-kan, then Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Novo-Sibirsk where they met Dr W.W. Yen, China's Ambassador to Moscow, for urgent consultations. Not much is said in *Turkistan Tumult* about the subject or result of these consultations. Following the meeting Lo would have liked to visit southern Sinkiang but the disturbed conditions there precluded this.

Before taking a look at Wu's subsequent experience his contribution to Sinkiang affairs may be assessed mainly as a force for sanity, sound policies and practical attention to the future well-being of the province. For someone whose stay there was of very limited duration his detailed knowledge of the causes and course of the Muslim Rebellion was astonishing as was his sympathetic grasp of the ways of life of Sinkiang's many racial groups. His own views on the political and economic future of Sinkiang, though touched with that simplification of which I have spoken, were bold and imaginative. He was not afraid openly to allude to the imperfections of past Chinese administration of Sinkiang, hoping for better things in the future.

In the early part of 1934 Wu was already travelling in Russian Turkistan when he heard of Ma Chung-yin's final defeat and flight into Soviet territory. From then until just before the outbreak of the Second World War Wu seems to have been continually in Central Asia or the Soviet Far East. By June 1937 he was Consul-General in Blagoveshchensk having first been down to Foochow to take leave of his family. To Wu family ties were always precious and important. There, he had the added pleasure of meeting the redoubtable

Harald Kierkegaard who had been transferred from the position of Postal Commissioner in Sinkiang to the equivalent post in Fukien (Fujian). Wu's tour of duty in Blagoveshchensk was followed by a time in Vladivostok — very familiar ground to him as he had been there in an official capacity as early as 1919 and many times afterwards. I have already noted his presence in London in 1939 and 1948. I was with Wu on the eve of the outbreak of war. Colonel Thomson-Glover, former British Consul at Kashgar, was then living in deepest Dorset and I drove Wu there to meet him so as to draw upon his consular experience in Kashgar for material for *Turkistan Tumult*. During the war years Wu evidently moved at a fairly high level in Chinese foreign affairs. He had, for instance, an interview in Hong Kong with Sun Fo (son of the statesman Sun Yat-sen) who had returned from Moscow where he had been negotiating for financial assistance. Wu's special interest in Sino-Soviet relations is indicated again by his talks — also in Hong Kong — in late 1941 with Yang Chie, a former Ambassador to Moscow. He must have left Hong Kong just before the attack on Pearl Harbour for he is on record as having met and talked with Chou En-lai in early December 1941 in Chungking (Chongqing). How he occupied himself during the war years is otherwise unknown to me. After the war his eminence was such that he had meetings with people of such standing as General Marshall. I am confident that had there been more men of Wu's stamp in the post-war Nationalist Government events in China might have turned out very differently. Wu's later years were spent in Taiwan after the Nationalist Government's removal to that island, but I have no knowledge as to whether he held any official position there or when he died.

Since the tumult described in this book, the province of Sinkiang has seen great changes and has weathered some rough passages. A population of two million in the 1930s has grown to the eleven million who now live in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, as it is known today. The map of Sinkiang displays a patchwork of autonomous districts and counties which are designated for the various racial groups. The ubiquity of the adjective 'autonomous' should not disguise the fact that the region is now firmly tied to the Chinese body politic and that the administration is dominated by Han influence. The communications advocated by Wu have been widely developed — although they stop short of the Soviet frontier — and have facilitated the pacification of the region.

During the Cultural Revolution leftist propaganda attacked and denounced the languages and institutions of the various races in Sinkiang. Happier conditions now obtain and it is pleasant to be able to record that new books and journals are now being printed in the various languages of the region and individual cultural identities are again being asserted. The periodical *Central Asian Survey*, in its October 1982 – January 1983 edition, listed no fewer than twenty-five current publications in Kazakh alone.

Aitchen K. Wu's other major work, *China and the Soviet Union*, has already been mentioned. It reviews the history of Russia's penetration of Asia and its relations with China in modern times up to 1950. For readers of Chinese there are two more of his books that have come to my notice. The first is *Hua-pei kuo-chi wu ta wen-t'i (Five Studies in the International Relations of North China)*. The other, which I take to be largely a Chinese version of *Turkistan Tumult*, is *Hsin-chiang chi-yü fu su-lien yu-chi (Travels in Sinkiang and the Soviet Union)*. Both these were published by the Commercial Press, the first in 1929 and the second in 1936.

Among the works of other authors that may be recommended are Peter Fleming's *News from Tartary*; Sven Hedin's *Big Horse's Flight*; Owen Lattimore's *Pivot of Asia — Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers* (almost all of Lattimore's work bears directly or indirectly upon Sinkiang); Sir Eric Teichman's *Journey to Turkistan*; Immanuel C.P. Hsü on *The Ili Crisis*, dealing with the diplomatic campaign to recover the Ili Valley for China after its occupation by Russia; Alan Whiting's *Sinkiang — Pawn or Pivot*, which is largely Sheng Shih-tsai's apologia; and Lars-Erik Nyman's *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests in Sinkiang 1918 – 1934*.

William Drew
Norfolk
May 1984

TO

THE MEMORY OF

MY DEAR MOTHER

WHO DIED SUDDENLY

WHILE I WAS IN SOVIET RUSSIA

PREFACE

IN THE PREPARATION of this book, I have received encouragement and assistance from numerous friends, to whom I desire to express my gratitude. Colonel Thomson Glover, formerly British Consul-General at Kashgar, has carefully read over my manuscript and given me some sound hints. Dr. Lin Yutang has read the first part of the book, and has otherwise rendered assistance. Mr. W. J. Drew, an old-timer in Urumchi, whom I had the greatest pleasure in finding again in London, has also gone through my work, and even undertaken the trouble of assisting me to prepare maps. Lastly, I wish especially to express thanks to my friend Mr. Clifford Troke, who has helped me to polish my English.

I would like to add that I have no personal bias for or against any of the persons mentioned in the narrative. I have tried my utmost to give an impartial record of events in that far-away land.

AITCHEN K. WU

London
October 10th 1939

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROVINCE of Sinkiang (Chinese Turkistan), the most westerly portion of China, is a part of the world concerning which very little is known. Large areas are still unmapped, and even those 'maps' which exist contain a good deal of guesswork and are on a very small scale. As for political conditions, these are still more obscure; and yet signs are not wanting that this huge province (as big as the British Isles, France, and Germany together), along whose frontiers Russia, India, and China meet, may play as important a part in the future as in the forgotten past. Over these mountains and deserts Marco Polo reached China. The Eurasian Air Lines, linking Berlin with Shanghai, did in five days what it took Marco Polo over a year to do. These 'planes made Urumchi, capital of Sinkiang, the first stop on Chinese soil. Thus, after centuries of disuse, the Silk Route, once the only link between East and West, may regain its old importance.

Before trade can flow again, however, political and social conditions must be stabilized. With this end in view the Chinese Government sent two separate envoys to Urumchi, the largest city of that distant province, close upon two thousand miles from the Chinese seaboard, the way to which is barred by the Gobi Desert. Fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, the writer happened to be there in the capacity of adviser to the Governor and was a witness of the religious riots at the time. Four of us travelled together through Japan and Siberia, of whom one was killed at night in the heat of the political uprising.

This book is a record of the events of that period, during which an Islamic revolt was defeated and two internal *coups d'état* brought the province under a new rule. As an account of strange and significant happenings on the very 'edge of beyond', it may perhaps prove of interest to the Western reader. So far as the writer is concerned it is a faithful record of a fragment of world history in the making of which he can claim some slight share.

CHAPTER ONE

I RIDE A LONG WIND

'Find me a long wind to ride on and a thousand miles of waves to cleave!'
TSUNG CHEH (Han Dynasty)

THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS and travellers of the Western world have written a great deal about Chinese Turkistan, but this book is the first that a Chinese has written, so it may be well if I begin by a few words of humble explanation.

My name is Wu Ai Chen. You in the West would reverse the order of these words, for Wu is the surname; and since my duties have brought me much into contact with Westerners, this is what I have done. I sign myself Aitchen K. Wu, which my many European friends can remember and write without difficulty; and those who meet me for the first time can tell at a glance from my card that I am Mr. Wu and not Mr. Chen.

I state these facts at the outset not because I think myself or my name important, but by way of simple and straightforward introduction. You who read this book are about to join me on a long journey; it is necessary that we become acquainted.

The fact that the name Aitchen which I have coined for your convenience has an American air leads people sometimes to think that I may perhaps have Western blood in my veins. But this is not so. I am of pure Chinese stock, a humble scholar, descendant of five generations of scholars, which fact is stated with modest pride upon a board which hangs outside our house in Foochow: 'Here reside the family of Wu—scholars for five generations.' Then the names are given; it is a matter of some grief to me that mine does not appear.

The reason for this may interest you, signifying as it does the changes which have taken place in China. In the old days scholarship, that is, knowledge of the Chinese classics, was the sole qualification for appointment to the Government service. The final examination lasted a week, the candidates spending all that time immured in their wooden cells, their pots of food and of ink beside them, before them the paper on which their

theses must be inscribed. The questions consisted of three theses and one poem, and seven days were allotted for the answers. The slightest error meant failure, and the definition of error included the least fault not only of matter but of style.

It was a grim ordeal, a tremendous test of memory and mental endurance, but for those who triumphed an honourable career of public usefulness was assured. There were three grades of examination: *Shiu chai* (B.A.), that of the district; *Chu jen* (M.A.), that of the province; and *Chin shu* or *Han-lin* (Ph.D.), the highest degree of all, awarded only at Peking.

Only after one at least from each of five successive generations has achieved the rank of *Chu jen* may the coveted board be displayed before the home of a Chinese family. My father was the fourth generation, and it was a matter of great concern to him that owing to the passing of the Ching dynasty and the coming of new Republican China the classic examinations would be abolished before I was old enough to compete in them. Before I was four years old he began to teach me from the *Four Books of Confucius*, and when it seemed clear that I should not be eligible he was greatly concerned, for he saw the much-prized honour slipping from our grasp. But fortunately one of my cousins, older than myself, passed the examination in the last year of its official existence. The family honour was saved.

In due course I continued my studies, extending their scope to science and modern languages. At the hands of the Manchu Government I was awarded the *Chu jen* and then under the Republic I graduated at the National University of Peking, afterwards spending several years in the United States; but my father would never acknowledge that distinctions won under the new conditions should rank with those won under the old régime, so the name of Wu Ai Chen is not inscribed upon our board.

Sometimes I am asked concerning the meaning of my name. Ai means 'the gentle'; Chen was a name adopted by my father under the Ching dynasty and means, 'a dwelling-place for the Emperor'. If after our journey together you still think of me as 'the gentle Wu', it will give me much pleasure.

Philosophers have long debated to what degree a man controls his own destiny and how far he is the slave of chance. It would be easy to say that pure chance ordained my journey,

and yet I know that the chance was somewhat of my own seeking and that long before the sudden opportunity presented itself my eyes were turning to the far western regions of our land. When the Manchurian incident broke out in September 1931 it seemed to us all that this was merely the first step in a prelude to further manœuvres upon our seaboard. This being so, it was evident that inland communications, so long neglected owing to the vast distances and physical barriers of the hinterland, were now of vital importance, and the more progressive minds of the administration were concerned as to their organization and improvement.

Like so many others of my family before me, I had obtained employment in the Government service, and following a secretaryship to a minister had been appointed to the post of Commissioner for Foreign Affairs at Hankow. There are so many foreigners in China that the task of balancing their conflicting interests is delicate and exacting, but it provides good training in diplomacy, while continual contact with other points of view is an excellent tonic for the mind. But though my stay at Hankow must remain one of the happiest periods of my life, and the warm friendships with Europeans which resulted from my duties still endure, I was full of anxiety concerning the future of my country and longed to be of service in a wider sphere.

To the enthusiast it must always appear that Government decisions are arrived at with distressing slowness. In 1931 the importance of closer relations with Sinkiang was at last realized, and Sheng Shih-tsai, an officer on the staff of Chiang Kai-shek, finding promotion too slow in Nanking, decided to go to Urumchi, capital of the province, to take service under the Governor, Chin Shu-jen. The Sinkiang representative at Nanking offered to escort him on the journey, since its difficulties at that time were considerable.

So far I was in no way concerned with the project, save that I gave to it my most vehement approval, but it chanced that a friend of mind was entertaining the Sinkiang official at a farewell dinner, and knowing my interest in these matters, he invited me to be present.

Lu, from Sinkiang, the guest of honour, stout, good-humoured, moustached, glanced at me curiously at our introduction, and I returned the glance. Where had we met

before? Slowly the archives of memory were consulted, and at last there was delighted recognition. Lu was an old schoolfellow of mine, and though it was twenty-five years since we had last met we had the friendliest recollections of each other.

This was the chance which led to my subsequent journeyings. Over bird's-nest soup and lotus-seed we discussed the problems of his province. He was full of its possibilities, telling me that its resources were far greater than was realized. Iron and coal were to be found there; in the mountains were clear signs of gold; there was little doubt in his mind that the oil deposits of Russia were continued beneath the strata of Sinkiang. As for agriculture, he said, he was well aware that his native plains were thought of as rainless desert, but even so there were valleys of great fertility where cotton of good quality was grown, and if proper use were made of the mountain snowfall, irrigation schemes might change the face of lands at present barren. 'Come and see for yourself,' he said.

I asked concerning the rumours of trouble which I had heard. He waved them aside. It was true, he admitted, that the rebel tribes, Mohammedans, and good fighters, were a source of anxiety from time to time; but for the most part the province was peaceful—'far more peaceful than you are likely to be here,' he said meaningly; and I confessed that I shared his forebodings.

In a few days I in my turn gave a dinner-party and our discussion continued. My friend urged me to go with him to Sinkiang when he returned. There was great need, he said, of trained officials, and my services would be welcomed. But I felt that it would be unwise to make too hasty a move since my present duties could not be at once laid aside. I suggested that on his return to Urumchi he should inform the Governor of my willingness to serve and send me official confirmation of my appointment. In the end he agreed that this was the wisest course, and a few days later I went to the station to speed my friend upon his journey. Sheng, who had gone ahead, was waiting for Lu at Harbin. I little knew then what dangers we were all three to share in days to come or to what heights of bravery and statesmanship Lieutenant Sheng would rise.

Almost a year went by. There were letters from Lu, but they were few in number and slow in reaching me; and then

one day there came a telegram requesting that I should leave immediately. Just at the moment when I had begun to wonder whether my appointment had indeed miscarried, I found myself plunged at a moment's notice into an enterprise concerning the outcome of which my friends could none of them conceal their doubts and apprehensions.

The reason for the suddenness of my departure was that on so arduous a journey it was thought best that I should not travel alone, but should join three other officials who were about to leave. In choosing the quickest and most convenient route the question of crossing China was not even considered. There was no railway save for the first few hundred miles, and even for motor transport the swamps and great deserts of the interior are treacherous obstacles—as those who have read Sir Eric Teichman's fine story of his travels will remember. Our best way to Urumchi was through Russia, the stages being: by sea to Kobe, Japan; from there by another boat to Vladivostok; thence by Trans-Siberian Railway to Novo-Sibirsk; next by the famous 'Turksib' line, only recently completed, to Semipalatinsk; from that point motor-truck through the winter snows, southwards to the Sinkiang frontier; and thence over desert and mountain to Urumchi, at the foot of the Tien Shan range.

A glance at the map will show what a formidable detour this route involved; but even so it was far simpler than organizing a motor-truck caravan across the Gobi. My companions had already some days' start of me and it meant great haste on my part if I were to overtake them. Fortunately I was prepared, my affairs were in order, my outfit in readiness; also I had journeyed to Foochow to bid farewell to my mother, now of a great age, since I feared that she might not be alive on my return. She on her part feared for me, but I did my best to comfort her, saying that all was peaceful in Sinkiang, and that there would be no danger. How far from the truth this was will in due time appear.

The liner *Nanrei Maru* sailed from Tientsin, the port of Peking, bound for Kobe, Japan, on November 19th 1932. My family came to see me off, and though the journey was the fulfilment of a cherished ambition I found the leave-taking more disturbing to the emotions than I had expected. All at once the great distances I was to travel became very real to

me, and the possible dangers grew more vivid in my mind. On a page of my note-book I wrote a few lines of verse:

> Long have I pledged myself to lands unknown,
> To journey on while dewfall turns to frost,
> Following the caravan trail on the silent desert
> Where the wild geese in the sunset cry for cold.
>
> . . . . .

In calm weather we slipped quietly through the Korea strait to Shimonoseki. There the Japanese quarantine officers came on board and asked a great many questions. I could see that they were not satisfied with my answers, but they allowed me to proceed. We now turned into the Inland Sea, whose gently undulating waves were like folds of green silk, reflecting the magnificent forest-clad hills of the shore.

We arrived at Kobe on the morning of the 23rd, and the police were once more active. They informed me that they had received a report from Shimonoseki concerning me and that I must submit to a further examination. The Manchurian 'incident' was still in progress, and while it was not admitted by Japan that this was more than the suppression of banditry, it can be imagined that relations with China were strained and suspicion rampant. I was compelled to answer innumerable questions, and though officials from the Chinese Consulate were there to vouch for me their testimony had little weight in my favour.

The trouble was that it was quite impossible to convince the Japanese police that a Chinese official travelling to Sinkiang in the far west could, if in his right mind, make the eastward voyage to Kobe the first stage of his journey. It seemed pretty clear to them that I was going to Manchuria, probably to assist the 'rebels'. During the examination of my luggage one of the officers discovered a photograph which showed me among a group of men in uniform. They were convinced that I was on some military mission and that I was probably of high rank. Only the most lengthy explanations sufficed to calm their fears.

On my return I went straight to the Yamato Hotel to meet the other members of the party. I had not been in Kobe for ten years and was much impressed by the rapid modernization of the city. Rickshaws had nearly all disappeared, and smart taxis had replaced them; the buildings, too, had made

corresponding advances. But I had little time to observe my surroundings. After a hasty visit to the Soviet Consulate, where I paid eleven gold dollars for my visa, we boarded the train for Tsuruga, from which port we were to sail.

The journey, by way of Osaka and Kyoto, took four hours. Tsuruga is a small coastal town of not more than five thousand inhabitants. A weekly steamship service runs to Vladivostok. At the wharf we saw the vessel, the *Amakusa Maru*, a small and somewhat decrepit ship. We noted with misgiving that even at anchor she rolled alarmingly.

My happiest memory of Tsuruga is Tseng-tse, the maid at our hotel. We conversed in English and I found her both cultured and charming. She had, she told me, graduated from a commercial college, a statement to which her many attainments bore witness. Outside in the wretched weather were the swarm of refugees from Manchuli, the first victims of the conflict in Manchuria. We talked of war and of its stupidity. Tseng-tse had no wish to fight any one, she said; she was, in fact, far readier to love them. My note-book contains two poems to the fair maid of Tsuruga, one of which speaks with sorrow of my advancing years. . . .

It was pleasant sitting before the charcoal brazier talking to Tseng-tse, whose beauty combined the vigour of health with the delicacy of aesthetic perception, but the time for sailing came and we emerged upon the dock to feel a grey rising gale upon our faces and to see white horses scurrying across the sea.

We had a terrible crossing; but worse than the storms which we encountered was the fog which lay in wait for us on the other side. We missed the entrance to the port and for some hours hung about in the channel uncertain of our position. It was with feelings of intense relief that I felt my steps once more upon firm land.

The routine of the customs was laborious in the extreme. Our money was counted and all our personal belongings minutely listed. My camera and my typewriter were solemnly entered upon my passport. I had taken them into Russia, and it must be made certain that I should take them out. To sell such things is strictly forbidden. Not long before a famous Chinese actor, Mei Lang-fang, had taken his troupe to Moscow and one of them had given a camera as a present to a member

of the Chinese Embassy who did him a kindness. At the border they were all held up because the camera was missing, and only after the Chinese Consul-General had given a personal guarantee that this was a case of a gift and not a sale could the actors proceed.

Vladivostok has lost some of its former importance, the Government centre having shifted to Khaborovsk. It was ten years since I had been in the port, and there seemed little evidence of improvement. Workers were issued with tickets which could be exchanged for food; foreigners had to make all purchases through the Torgsin office, where only foreign currency was taken. The exchange rates were: two roubles equal one gold dollar or five Chinese dollars. Any offence against the currency restrictions was punishable by criminal proceedings, and any overstaying of the permitted time of visit led to serious trouble.

Our hotel offered quite reasonable accommodation at a charge of three gold dollars per day, but conditions on the train were not very satisfactory. An air of decay seemed to hang over the railway station, the locomotives did not look very reliable, the rolling-stock was shabby and ill-appointed. Questioned as to times of arrival and departure, officials were vague. All that one could gather from their cautious announcements was that the train would start as soon as possible and proceed as fast as possible in a westerly direction. It would doubtless in due course arrive somewhere.

On the strength of this information we took our tickets for Novo-Sibirsk.

Awakening on my first morning on the train, I summoned the waiter and attempted to order bread and tea. Not till the Intourist interpreter had been called to my assistance did I succeed in making my wants known. The tea was bitter, and the bread seemed to have been baked in pre-Revolution days. At all the meals that followed the cooking was deplorable. Only sheer genius for creating human misery could have produced such execrable meals.

From the windows of the train were to be seen the level plains of Siberia, their dark pines and pointed fir-trees crusted with frozen snow. The sky was grey; the earth white. Now and again black specks appeared upon this desolation. On closer view these became log cabins. Sometimes human beings

were discernible around them. I soon ceased to gaze expectantly at the landscape and turned to the works of Dr. Sven Hedin with which I had provided myself for the journey. His records of journeyings in Western China might, I thought, be useful to me on my first acquaintance with that strange region. Nor was I disappointed; they are not only good reading but full of sound advice.

We were three hours late at Khaborovsk, which every one thought remarkably little, and we were delayed there three more hours by engine trouble, which was accepted as a matter of course. Setting off once more, we crossed the two-mile bridge which spans the Amur River, an awesome transit in the windswept night, and in the morning we tunnelled through a range of low hills. Then came the plains again. I returned to Sven Hedin.

At five o'clock on the evening of December 1st we steamed into Bochkarevo, from where the branch line runs to Blagovetchensk, some sixty miles away. There the Amur River marks the border of Manchuria, and on the opposite bank is the town of Hai-ho, where in 1921 I had journeyed in the course of my duties. Hai-ho, I reflected, had then seemed the end of the world; but now I was scarcely started upon my travels.

The weather became unbearably cold. Thick layers of ice formed upon the windows; the bedding seemed to give no warmth at all. We had now little thought of our surroundings, the effort to keep warm occupying all our thoughts. Sometimes a grinding of the wheels told us that we were upon a trestle bridge crossing a frozen river, but for the most part we knew that outside there was nothing but level snow sparsely dotted by pine-trees, as far as eye could see. A thermometer hung from the window showed us that there was a temperature of forty-five degrees of frost outside. Our other thermometer showed five degrees of frost in the closed carriage. During the night we all huddled together in one corner, chatting and joking to keep up our spirits.

Next day we stopped at a small station, a collection of huts lost in a vast white wilderness, and I tried to stretch my legs by a short walk in the snow. But I had not gone fifty yards before I was driven back into cover. Although there was no wind the air was like a mask of ice upon my face.

On the afternoon of December 3rd we arrived at Mogocha, a distance of 1,481 miles from Vladivostok. We no longer thought of asking whether we were late or early, or when we should start again. We were now reconciled to our fate, which was, it seemed, to travel for ever through endless ice and snow. Time and distance had ceased to have much meaning, and our brains were numbed with cold. In actual fact, I suppose, we were doing quite well. In five days of travel we had averaged just short of three hundred miles a day.

During the following day I read the pocket guide to the Soviet Union, which informed me that from Vladivostok to Novo-Sibirsk was 3,720 miles; to Moscow 5,812 miles; and to Leningrad 5,966. It told me that the Trans-Siberian Railway was the longest in the world; it omitted to add that it was also the slowest.

Late on the evening of December 4th a blaze of light dazzled our eyes. It was the railway station of Chita, most brilliantly illuminated. On a red banner prominently displayed we read the words: DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM! LONG LIVE THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION OF CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION!

The greeting was inscribed in both Russian and Chinese characters, but we were too tired to summon up any appropriate emotions. Another wearisome delay while fur-coated mechanics changed our engine further depressed our spirits. We noted with pleasure, however, that the new locomotive was of more modern design, also that from now onwards there was a double track.

On the following afternoon we stopped at Verkne Udinsk, which lies to the south-west. From this town a motor service and an air-line run to Urga, the capital of Outer Mongolia, and we were told that plans for a railway were under consideration. It was a sunny day, and at the station Buriat Mongols gathered to stare at us curiously. They looked very wild in their sheepskins and fur hats. Though short in stature, they gave the impression of great strength and endurance. They are a nomad people, a difficult problem for the Soviet theoreticians to deal with. I wondered what they thought of the new régime?

During the Great War Chinese troops fought in this territory, and Chita was actually occupied by the Japanese in 1918, though they were compelled in the end to retreat,

having achieved very little success. Now the Mongolian Republics, though still nominally under Chinese rule, are in fact controlled by the Soviets; but very little is known of conditions in this part of the world, and there seems good reason to doubt whether attempts at collectivization are proving successful, for the population are primitive nomadic tribes.

Though in some respects our conditions were improved, the food continued to be appalling. Lunch, which was known as *Obed*, was served between three and five in the afternoon, and it was later, it seemed, each day. The typical menu was as follows:

Soup—that is, hot salt water in which there floated two or three fragments of cabbage leaf.

Fried Rice Roll—this was rice slightly burned for added flavour.

Fish—a lump of salt fish, undercooked and quite uneatable.

There was no butter and the bread was of poor quality and very stale. It is only fair to add, however, that to-day conditions are improved out of all recognition and it is no longer necessary for travellers to take their own food when going by the Trans-Siberian Railway.

At length, just as dusk was falling, we came to the shores of Lake Baikal, which we followed for more than one hundred miles. This is a fine stretch of water, nearly four hundred miles in length and from twenty to thirty in width. The blue waves flashed in the sinking sun. All round the white plains also dazzled the eye. In the distance to north and south snow-clad mountains could be seen. It was a great relief to me when the lake came into view, for I had feared that we might pass it in the darkness. I had questioned railway officials as to whether this was likely, but had received evasive replies. It was clear that even on the double track line no one knew within a hundred miles or so where a train would be at any particular time.

With the sound of lake waters in my ears, distinct and soothing above the noise of the wheels, I meditated on the great lake and its place in the legends of my country. The ancient Chinese historians always refer to it as 'the North Sea'. Upon its banks one hundred years before the time of Christ an envoy of the Chinese Emperor was imprisoned by the ruler of the Huns. Su-wu, the faithful, had been sent by

an Emperor of the Han Dynasty as an ambassador of peace and goodwill towards the Huns, but while he was at the court of the Great Khan trouble arose and he was imprisoned. His followers were slain before his eyes and he was threatened with death if he did not forswear his loyalty to his master. Yet when he refused with scorn the Khan did not dare to kill him, knowing that were he in danger of defeat by the Chinese his captive might prove a useful hostage, whereas if he were slain the blood-guilt resting upon one who had murdered an ambassador might lead to terrible vengeance. So for eighteen years Su-wu lived in exile upon the shores of Lake Baikal, his royal master having been told that he had died by accident while hunting. Many and terrible were the hardships which he was forced to endure. He quenched his thirst with snow; he ate the fleece from his rugs to stay his hunger. But never did he deign to ask for mercy.

At length there was peace and a new envoy arrived at the court of the Khan. One night a servant of Su-wu crept to the tent of the new ambassador with the news that his predecessor was still alive. 'Tell the Khan his secret is discovered,' he said, 'but do not tell him I brought the news or he will take vengeance upon me. Say, rather, that your Emperor, walking in his private garden, shot down a wild goose and found a message tied to its leg.'

When the Khan heard this story he knew that denial was useless, and Su-wu was released. He was escorted back to China with every mark of honour, for the sufferings he had endured through loyalty to his trust were plainly marked upon him. But though worn and aged by his trials, he survived the long journey and at last stood once more before his Emperor, who knighted him and gave him a rich reward, commanding at the same time that his story should be told far and wide as an inspiration to the young men of the land, as indeed it is told to this day.

CHAPTER TWO

I REACH THE CITY OF ENLIGHTENMENT

'The people may be compelled to follow a path but not to understand it.'

CONFUCIUS

FROM CHITA onwards there was an evident multiplying of population. Villages were larger and more frequent, and the new buildings of collective farms could be seen here and there amid the beautiful expanses of pine forest. Whenever we stopped at a station the peasants would come crowding down to the wooden fence with milk, bread, sausages, and pickles for sale. Owing to the rate of exchange the prices were monstrous, but we were so glad to have some eatable food that we paid them gladly.

Late on the evening of December 7th we arrived at Novo-Sibirsk. This is the northern terminus of the Turksib line, so we collected our belongings and prepared to change trains for our journey south. We said good-bye to our fellow travellers, among whom was the Japanese ambassador to Rome and an English leading business-man returning to England from Shanghai. Then we piled our luggage upon the snow-swept platform and sought for information as to when our train would depart.

Not for twenty-four hours at least, we were told; we must go to the Soviet Hotel for the night. But how to get there was the problem. There was no one about, we did not know the way, and it was intensely cold. Speech was hardly possible, for the breath froze upon our lips. We waited, wretched in body and mind, while Kwan, the only one of our number who spoke Russian, went on an expedition in search of assistance.

Soon to our great joy he returned with a car. It was not a very good one, its springs were defective and the engine coughed, spluttered, and clanked; but at least it moved. After a short slithering ride along the frozen streets we reached the hotel, a paradise of warmth and light.

The following morning, much refreshed by a good night's rest in comfortable quarters, and best of all, a bath, we sallied

forth to tour the town. Everywhere there were signs of purposeful activity; sledges rushed at top speed in every direction. Slogans abounded; on the door of the municipal theatre were inscribed the words: LONG LIVE LENIN!

As night fell we came once more to the station. To take our tickets and to arrange for the transport of our baggage occupied more than two hours. Travellers such as ourselves were not frequent, and the luggage-master exerted himself to the utmost to ensure that not the least formality was omitted. There were endless questions, weighing and re-weighing of our possessions, forms filled up, destroyed because of error, and then fresh ones filled up once more. By the time that we were allowed upon the train our tempers were frayed by ceaseless worrying in the awful cold.

As for the train, it was a good deal worse than the one we had left. There were feather beds, but only the thinnest coverings to keep out the Siberian cold. The discomforts of that night are best forgotten. In the morning we had reached the district of Altai, which formerly belonged to China. There was no restaurant car on the train, but we made a good meal off sausages and some rather tough pigeon, together with some bread which was at least ten days old.

It is only four hundred miles from Novo-Sibirsk to Semipalatinsk, and we arrived there at three o'clock on the morning of the second day. A member of the Chinese consular staff was at the station to greet us, and we were taken at once to the consulate where we had our first good meal for a week. What pleased us most was the excellent white bread, but we were told that such food as this was the privilege of foreign consulates only and could not be bought in the town. There seemed to be a serious food shortage. The consulate staff grew their own vegetables and raised chickens, a very creditable achievement under difficult conditions. Their sugar and tobacco were purchased for them by the Soviet authorities, but supplies often ran short.

Later in the day we went to the market, but there seemed very little for sale, and what food there was appeared to be of very poor quality. Many of the population were in rags and all looked hungry. Kasaks, the nomad tribesmen of the plains, strong, fierce, and bearded, gazed at us curiously, their Mongol eyes very keen. . Kwan, our interpreter, knew their dialect and

exchanged a few words with them, but he came to regret this experiment, for their surprise at hearing a foreign official speak their native tongue led them to insist that he must be of their race, and they followed him everywhere.

We still had one short stage by rail. It was possible, we found, to go a further two hundred miles to Ayakuz, where the Motor Transportation Company would arrange for an open motor-truck to meet us. We were warned that the last stages of our journey would be difficult and that the cold was terrible upon the windswept plains. We therefore supplied ourselves with extra gloves, fur hats, and gaiters of black or white wool, reaching the knee.

The line to Ayakuz ran across snow-clad plains, where a terrible gale blew continuously. Few landscapes can be so dreary as this when the great winds are howling across the snows. However, by the time we reached our destination, the wind had dropped, the clouds had cleared, and a bright moon was shining.

Ayakuz, the last town of any size which we should see, was a dismal scene. Here the food-shortage was acute and hungry eyes watched enviously every mouthful that we ate. There was food for sale at the station, though at exhorbitant cost. The driver of our motor-truck said that there was no hotel, and advised an immediate start, promising that the weather would stay fair. As we consumed a hasty meal we were oppressed by shadowy spectres of starvation, who hovered round us. I turned to speak to one of my companions—at once a lean hand shot out as if from nowhere and my roll of bread had vanished. I swung round to protest—once more a thin hand reached out, and this time it was my meat which had gone. Now a waiter came and drove the hungry watchers away; but as soon as his back was turned they crept nearer once again. Never have I eaten with so troubled a mind. It was a nightmare meal.

Leaving the station, we gazed at the bare plains which lay before us. Annoying as the discomforts of our journey had been, so far they had been little more than inconveniences; but now with some six hundred miles of motor travel before us, a route crossing snow-swept deserts and difficult hill-country, we realized that the real difficulties of our journey had begun.

The Turksib railway, which we were regretfully leaving behind us, runs south and then west to Tashkent, there striking north-west across Russia to Moscow. It was one of the principal tasks accomplished under the first Five-Year Plan, and was undoubtedly constructed primarily for military purposes. For many hundred miles it runs parallel to the frontier of Sinkiang, and at the time of its building there were serious apprehensions in China concerning it. But graver troubles by far were threatening in the east, and our fears were soon forgotten. Now it is clear that given good relations between China and the U.S.S.R., the railway will be of immense value in opening up distant regions and stimulating trade.

The motor-truck was of Czechoslovak manufacture, strongly built and inspiring confidence, but only the driver's seat was protected; the part where we were to sit was more or less open to the four winds of heaven. Since this was a part of the world where the winds are proverbially terrific we took what measures we could against them, seating ourselves as low as possible with our backs to the driver's cab and piling our belongings carefully around us. The little well which we thus formed we roofed in with all the rugs and skins available, leaving only as much aperture as was needful if we were to breathe.

While we made these preparations the hungry Kasaks hovered round, their eyes watching us keenly for that unguarded moment in which some object or package would be left untended. But we were warned against their depredations and took turns in standing guard. At last we were on our way. The driver, a lean Russian, warmed up the engine, nodded nonchalantly that he was ready, and climbed into his seat. A jerk, a grinding of gears, and we were moving. The last stage of our journey into Chinese Turkistan had begun.

We huddled together for warmth, which indeed we had been doing most of the way from Vladivostok. By this time we had all four become well acquainted, and fortunately the friendliest possible relations had been maintained. Now, as we jerk and jolt across the frozen snows of the moonlit steppe, let me pause to say a word of my companions.

First there was Kwan, who had succeeded my friend Lu as the representative of Sinkiang at Nanking. He was a Manchu, born at Kuldja, a frontier town three hundred and fifty miles

west of Urumchi. If it seems strange to find one of pure Manchu stock born so many thousand miles from the home of his people, let me explain how such exile came about. Long ago, an Emperor of China, wishing to confirm his hold upon the frontiers of his land, ordered a body of his Manchu subjects to journey to the west. He promised them that after a period of service on the frontier they should return and that others should take their place, but the promise was never kept, and the Manchu settlers were forced to stay in exile. Their descendants are still to be found there to-day, and it is worthy of note that they speak the purest Manchu language to be found in China, since their isolation preserved their speech from corruption. In fact, it would be near the truth to say that the Manchus in Peking and to the north-east have almost forgotten their mother tongue.

Kwan was typical of his race, tall, broad-shouldered, reserved save to his intimate friends, serious of countenance, and resolute of heart. He had been appointed to present finely carved jade seals to Nanking and to bring with him on his return the bronze seals issued to the Tupan of Sinkiang by the Central Government. This was an important mission, but Kwan was worthy of the honour. The finest jade to be found in China comes from Sinkiang. The seals which Kwan had carried with him to Nanking had been of considerable beauty and value, and are still in use.

Kwan had, in a sense, become the leader of our party, since his knowledge of Russian made him naturally most competent to make arrangements, haggle with peasants for food, and deal with obstructive officialdom. We were very appreciative of his efforts on our behalf, and had laughed a great deal when, in an effort to make the long freezing hours pass quicker, he had told us many stories of the wild escapades of his youth.

Pei and Kung, the two Kuo-min-tang Commissioners, were an interesting contrast of types. Pei, wiry and of middle height, had a thin, dark face and a ceaseless flow of good humour and common sense. He came from Hami on the edge of the Gobi Desert three hundred miles to the east of Urumchi. He had spent his youth as a student in Japan, had married a Japanese wife, and could well have passed as one of that nationality. He was a very good violinist indeed, an enthusiast for Western music, a strenuous disciple of Beethoven. During

many a weary hour of our journey his fiddle cheered our spirits. Kind, witty, utterly without fear, Pei was a good man to have with you upon your travels. As I write of him now I salute his brave spirit. He was fated to meet with death upon the path of duty.

Kung, his scholarly colleague, was thin and frail. Though he too had been born in Sinkiang, his family came from Tientsin, the port of Peking. Many years ago, for what reason I cannot tell, his father had made the long journey to Kuldja and had settled there, opening in course of time an eating-house, the reputation of which has since spread far and wide. The son was a lover of books and had passed his student days in Peking. Knowledge was his watchword; he was an enthusiast for education and the enlightenment which it brings.

He talked of it now as we lay half-frozen upon the boards of a jolting motor-truck, the snows around us and a rising gale roaring overhead. It was now midnight, and in three hours we had covered little more than forty miles, the going was so bad. The wind was once again at gale force and the temperature was falling sharply. The driver stopped after a while and without a word to us took shelter in a hut. Meanwhile we waited in the cold outside; it was a wretched hovel and we were better off where we were. Only my eyes and the flesh upon my cheekbones was exposed. This now began to smart intolerably. My feet were numbed. Lying on my back, I gazed up at the bright stars which looked down upon the wilds of Turkistan. They made no answer.

At length we were on our way once more; but now the cold began to affect the engine and there were frequent stops. The driver cursed the petrol, which was of doubtful quality; he also was terribly afraid when the engine stopped that it would freeze up before he could get it started again. There was nothing that we could do to assist him, so he had to fight his own battles. Luckily for us he won through. The engine groaned and coughed, and there were ominous clankings, but apart from the occasional stoppages it kept us moving over the frozen crust of the earth at a steady twelve miles an hour, with occasional bursts of speed when the rate increased to close upon twenty. I drifted into an uneasy sleep, dreaming that I was feasting and that my face was flushed and burning from drinking much good wine. I was, in fact, in grave danger

of serious frostbite, which accounted for the burning sensation of my dreams.

When I awoke it was dawn, the grey light turning first to gold and then to flame, the colours glittering upon sky and snow with beauty bewildering to the mind. The truck jolted to a standstill before a small wayside hostelry, before which in a roughly fenced yard some twenty laden trucks were standing. Those on the way to Sinkiang carried petrol, cigarettes, piece goods, and all kinds of implements and machinery; those on the outward journey were laden with bales of cotton and great piles of skins. All were held up by the weather through which our driver had not feared to drive. There were sixty trucks doing the journey, he told us, and there was a constant flow of trade.

We started off again, but before we had gone many miles a group of Soviet guards called upon us to halt. We knew that our papers were in perfect order and we were in no temper to be delayed by officious prying. Kwan, a figure of some dignity, retorted sharply to the leader who accosted him: 'So you wish to see our papers, eh? Very well, then—first show me your authority and I will show you ours!'

This spirited reply so nonplussed the Russian soldiers that they raised no further objection to our passage and in a few moments we were on our way. But we had not gone very far before I heard a strange noise from among the pile of baggage heaped upon the truck. I sat up to look and at that moment a wiry yellow hand came into view among the bales and boxes. It was a Kasak who had leaped upon the moving truck, hoping to dislodge some piece of our luggage and jump off with it unperceived. When we shouted to the driver to stop, he leapt to the ground with ape-like agility and ran for his life. Following this uncomfortable incident we redoubled our precautions. Lost equipment cannot be easily replaced on the borders of Turkistan.

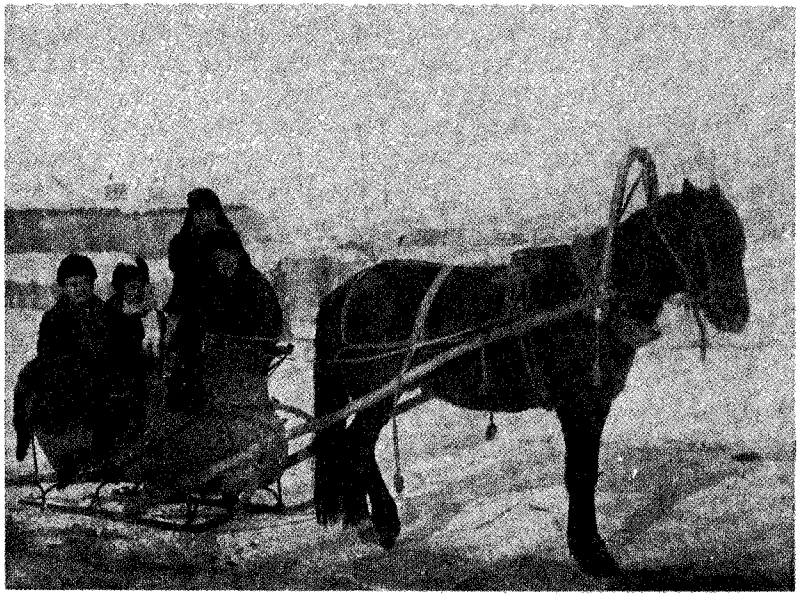
By late afternoon we had arrived safely at the border town of Bakhti, one hundred and ninety-two miles from Ayakuz, having taken close upon twenty hours to cover the distance. There were two hundred Soviet guards in the town, but though they clustered round us suspiciously at first, it was soon plain that they had been warned of our coming, for they treated us with courtesy and supplied us with a car by means of which

we reached the Chinese frontier-town a few miles beyond. There we found that the Chinese magistrate at Chuguchak, fifteen miles across the border, had sent a sleigh to meet us. We boarded it immediately and crossed on to Chinese soil.

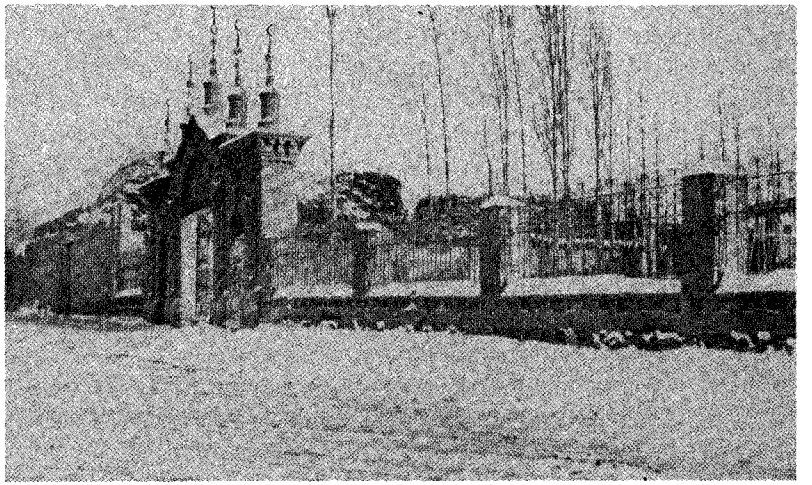
The frontier is not very clearly marked in these regions. There are piles of stones at irregular intervals and sometimes a few posts, but in general such signs are in ill repair. The last survey was made under the Ching Dynasty some hundred and fifty years ago and accurate mapping still remains to be done. It will be an immense task, but the use of aerial photography may simplify it considerably.

It was now getting dark, and the last few miles took more than two hours. We were weary in every limb, but soon forgot our bruises—so cordial was the welcome which awaited us. It was twenty-four days since I had left Tientsin, and we were congratulated on the speed of our travel. An impressive feast was laid out in the house which had been assigned to us, and we were saluted by local dignitaries who had awaited our arrival. The wine-cups were filled and refilled 'to wash away the dust of travel', as we say in China; but when it was seen that we were exhausted we were quickly conducted to our sleeping-quarters. I felt that a night's sound sleep would work wonders. I was tired out, but at least I was among my own countrymen, and though Chuguchak might be at the very edge of the world to me it felt like home.

Refreshed and full of new vigour, I went out next morning to pay my respects to the local authorities. Chuguchak is the Mongolian name for the town, which I give first since it appears on many European maps. The Chinese name, which I shall use from now on, is Tacheng. The ancient name was Kanchu, and the town is thus referred to in the records of the Han Dynasty two hundred years before Christ; but when the Manchu Emperor, Chien-lung of the Ching Dynasty, conquered the town in the middle part of the eighteenth century he named it Tarbagatai. In those times it was of great importance as a frontier garrison post, apart from the fame of the market to which it owed its prosperity. In 1892 the name was changed to Tacheng and the city was divided into two portions; in the Chinese part there was installed a civil magistrature, while the military authorities (the Tao-tai's yamen) were in the Manchu city. The market continued to



SLEDGE RIDE IN CHUGUCHAK (TACHENG)
THE AUTHOR (LEFT) WITH PEI AND KUNG (RIGHT)



LEADING MOSQUE IN CHUGUCHAK (TACHENG)

prosper, and on the morning when I first surveyed it there was a scene of amazing life and colour, men of all races, animals of every breed, thronging the streets in a strangely peaceable confusion.

Face by face I described the mingled peoples: Manchus, Moslems (restricting this term to indicate the native Turki race—the Uighur), Tungans, Kasaks, Mongols, Tartars, and many indeterminate types beside. Each had their own dress and language, in creed and custom they were poles apart; yet they all seemed to live and barter together in perfect harmony. Sheep, donkeys, horses, oxen yellow and black, thronged the streets, but all were so tame that they seemed to step aside rather than jostle the wayfarer; and though the babel of contrasted tongues rose up on every side it was all peaceful and purposeful discourse with no discordant notes to strike the ear. The long-necked camels looked down with philosophic friendliness upon the activities of their human brethren. For all its tumult, this was an idyllic scene.

The Tungans, known as Chinese Mohammedans, are tall and strongly built; fierce and warlike in their features, they walk with a lordly air. They dress in normal Chinese fashion, but their white hats single them out amid the throng. Their language is Chinese (the name should more properly be written T'ung-kan), and their customs, save in religious matters, show few departures from the normal; but in character they show considerable differences, and a close examination of their features reveals traces of alien origin. They are found both in the north and south of Sinkiang, living together in separate communities, and their periodic revolts have caused a good deal of trouble. They have, nevertheless, the makings of good citizens.

The Moslems are of Turkish origin. They are short and bearded, often fat. In winter they wear fur caps, but in warmer weather cotton skull-caps red and green in colour. Their leather boots come knee-high; for the rest their clothing is on European lines, as are indeed their facial characteristics, save for the extreme darkness of their hair and eyes.

The Kasaks I have already mentioned; for they are nomads and may be met with anywhere. Bearded like the Moslems, whose faith they share, they are short, stout, and fur-hatted; a strong, meat-eating race, they have no interest in tilling the

soil or in any pursuit save the rearing of cattle. In the early days of the Soviet Administration officials lacking in knowledge and imagination attempted to force changes upon them. Their herds were seized and 'collectivized', they were rounded up and made to work. Having no means of life save their live stock, they died in large numbers, and only when it was realized that a hardy and useful people were in process of being exterminated was the Soviet policy towards them liberalized. Perhaps in course of time they may adapt themselves to new ways of life, but I doubt it. Centuries of unchanging customs left an inerasable imprint upon the minds of some tribes.

The Mongols are very different. They are Buddhists, are calmer in speech and manner, and have the impassive features of their race. One son in nearly every family is a lama and wears the yellow robe of the priesthood. Often even those who are not priests wear yellow robes; and satin shoes, the points of which curve upwards, are a distinguishing feature of their dress. Their facial character is similar to that of the Chinese, but the cheekbones are slightly more emphasized and the slant of the eyes is more noticeable.

As for the Tartars, they are a strange and splendid people, their history a long romantic struggle, their manner princely, their nature impulsive both in friendship and in anger, their bodies skilful in wild dancing, their hearts full of song. The mixture of Mongol with white blood has produced women of extraordinary beauty. It is noticeable, however, that as they are brought increasingly into contact with civilizing influences they tend to become Europeanized, losing something of their charm.

In the bazaar at Tacheng these peoples mingle. Each type has marked out for itself certain trades and activities, and all contribute something to the communal life. The Tungans, for example, are the butchers. In the doorways of huts and houses you see them stand, their sharp, short knives in their hands, an entirely docile sheep gripped between their knees and patiently awaiting its quietus. It is estimated that in Sinkiang province some thirty thousand sheep are killed every day, a serious drain upon the herds. The skins go to Russia, most of them along the road by which we came.

Fuel is scarce and thus sheep-droppings are carefully hoarded. At night the well-fed sheep from the pastures are

rounded up into pens and every morning their droppings are collected. Pressed into small cakes these make an excellent slow-burning fuel, without smell, and maintains exceptionally even heat. The rooms are warmed by a big stove built into the wall. The stove needs to be refuelled only once a day.

For a while I wandered among the crowd of traders, listening to the clear hollow note of the slender camel bells and the tinklings of the small round bells hung upon the sleigh horses. Sounds and colours were clear in the cold air, and the white snow underfoot and all around added to the vividness of the scene. At length, calling at the house of an official, I was welcomed and offered breakfast, mare's milk and horse-meat sausage, with good new bread. The milk was rather sour in flavour. I found afterwards that when fermented it has a definite alcoholic effect if drunk in any quantity. The sausage was, however, extremely good, and I enjoyed my meal. This horse-meat sausage is accounted a great delicacy in Sinkiang. The stuffing is mixed with great care and baked slowly in sheep-gut over a sheep-dung fire. Of course, the younger the horse the more tender the meat in the sausage.

On a later occasion when I was visiting a wealthy Kasak nomad my host had his stud of young ponies paraded before me and asked me which I fancied the best. On my pointing out a very fine young animal as in my opinion the best piece of horse-flesh present, I was embarrassed to see it at once led away to slaughter and realized that this was the tribal custom when it was intended to show respect to a guest. Of course, had I known the purpose of my host's question, I should have chosen a less handsome pony; but I must add that the horse steak off which we dined that day was exceptionally tender and good.

Having breakfasted I went to the public baths. The building was the typical Turkish structure; there was no luxury, but all the needs of health were provided for. The clientele were largely Moslems, but turbans were rarely to be seen. They are still called 'turban heads' by the Chinese, however, for old terms have a way of long outliving their accuracy.

Having made a formal call upon the civil authorities, I continued my stroll through the town. I was interested to observe the currency in use. There were tael notes equal to four hundred cash—that is, small copper coins. Standards of

living are so different in East and West that I will make no attempt to suggest what would be your European equivalents of this system of values. I was told that coin had long disappeared from circulation, and that notes were in existence representing sums as low as forty cash.

These notes were very curious, for they were of oiled cloth such as is used in the making of umbrellas and light-weight sleeping-bags. In Urumchi (Tihwa), I found later, the finance bureau runs an old hand-operated printing-press on which these notes are stamped out. They measure roughly three by four inches, are sealed with the square red ink imprint of the provincial Ministry of Finance, and their value is stated in both Arabic and Chinese characters. Some time afterwards when travelling in Sinkiang I saw a further form of currency, the old 'dragon notes', found chiefly in the southern districts, and valued specially by the natives for their beauty, durability, and convenience of carriage. The actual value of these notes is often higher than the face value, so greatly are they esteemed.

Returning to our quarters, I found that invitations to ceremonial feastings had already begun to arrive. I belong to the New China and am inclined to be impatient of the lengthy ritual with which all such hospitality is encumbered. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to feel the charm of ancient custom, more especially when it is a perfect expression of courtesy and goodwill.

The Tao-tai, or Commissioner, was absent at the time of our arrival, for his head-quarters were at Hami, some six hundred miles away, but his deputy acted as host. Although we were so far from the luxuries of the East every detail of the prescribed ceremonial was most strictly adhered to, and the cooking showed no sign of the fact that more than two thousand miles of mountain, swamp, and desert lay between us and Peking. However, before several days had passed I was weary of the endless civilities, the bird's-nest soup, the shark-fin stew, the lotus seeds; though my patience was richly rewarded on one occasion when a band of Tartars were summoned to entertain us, for they followed their songs and music by an amazing rhythmic dance known as the 'Wei-lan'. Never shall I forget those agile feet, that barbaric music. This was not the effeminate dancing of the cabaret, but the real thing.

Since our arrival it had rarely ceased to snow and there had

never been less than thirty degrees of frost outside. Our quarters were so comfortable and well warmed that the ordeal of going out of doors was made worse for us. So fascinating were the streets, however, that whenever there was a gleam of sun I went in search of new sights and sounds. While the sun was on high the market-place was crowded, but as soon as night fell the streets had the quietness of death, and this at an hour at which in a port such as Shanghai or Tientsin night life would just have begun.

For ten days we remained in Tacheng. No sooner were the feasts of welcome concluded than our departure was announced and the feasts of farewell began. It was to Kwan's high status as a bearer of Government seals that we owed these honours, but for my part, fascinated as I was by the markets and temples of the city, I would willingly have been spared the long hours of ceremonial so as to have had more time for casual wandering. Our list of official engagements having been concluded, it was next the turn of the merchants to entertain us. Two wealthy Moslems gave us dinner and spoke sorrowfully of the state of trade. The Russian authorities, realizing that they were the only large-scale buyers, had taken advantage of this to fix a scale of prices which made profit hardly possible. 'We have to sell at big sacrifices,' said the merchants, 'and who knows what the future will bring?'

I was sorry for them, for they are industrious, God-fearing people, strict in their religious observance, and very abstemious in their way of life. Their houses are built around two spacious courtyards, in one of which their business is transacted, while the other is reserved for their private concerns. All who came were considered to be guests and were offered mare's milk or tea, with sweet cakes, great offence being taken were the offer refused. Wine, however, was forbidden, a rule to which they did not strictly adhere.

Our hosts gave us much information as to trading conditions, and told us that the Russians had founded a Sinkiang Trading Corporation and were planning to build a branch of the Turksib railway right to the frontier of the province. What the result of such a move would be was a matter of much conjecture.

One day after dinner a Moslem merchant took us into the courtyard of his home to show us the famous spring which

flowed there. Tradition held that these waters were first discovered by a Mongol who came upon them by chance in his wanderings. Having drunk of them from his wooden cup, he let it fall unnoticed from his hand, and when on the following day he discovered his loss he sent one of his party in search of it, who was accompanied by several of his friends. In this way the spring became known as 'Chuguchak' or 'Wooden Cup', by which name the Kasaks and Moslems still call the city which little by little has grown around it.

For all their complaints, I judged that the merchants were well pleased with life in Tacheng. There was peace and considerable prosperity; taxes were light and were often paid in kind. There was a levy of one per cent on all sales of cattle, and a general duty on all other merchandise. Wine and tobacco were also taxed, though very leniently; there was no tax on income, and no system of licences. As for land, there was so much of it to spare, that a man had only to pay a registration fee of a few cents to enter into possession of any vacant plot which he chose. Even so there were still large areas of fertile soil left untilled, for the Kasaks could never be induced to interest themselves in agriculture.

Nor would they dwell in towns, but lived in their round Mongolian tents made of felt stretched upon poles. They were herdsmen and hunters, all other duties being left to their women. On horseback they are superb. From an early age the youngsters live in the saddle, and furious races are their favourite sport. At the sounding of a bugle each man leaps upon the best horse he can find to dash wildly, sometimes for many miles, to seize the newly killed lamb which has been placed at the finish of the race as prize. These races, in which the children often take part, must be seen to be believed. Sometimes the course is no less than twenty miles.

The merchants spoke with concern of the thriftless Kasaks, who were indifferent to everything but their races and their cattle. There was great wealth to be developed in Sinkiang, but none would labour. Ten miles north of Tacheng gold had been found in the hills of Katou. In the past the mine had employed ten thousand workers, but a rebellion of the Mohammedan tribesmen had stopped the work. Now that peace had come it had been hoped to restart the enterprise, and for a while work had been resumed under the joint control

of Russian and Chinese merchants. But although expensive new machinery had been installed the scheme had failed again. Now only broken walls and rusting gear marked the spot.

From Tacheng our route lay to Tihwa. On the day of our departure all the soldiers, police, and students in the city lined the streets to cheer us, for the district magistrate was one of our party. The big Dodge car which had been sent to fetch us was uncomfortably crowded, for the Military Governor had ordered four soldiers to accompany us as bodyguard, the first indication we had seen of possible danger. During the first day of our journey we covered hardly sixty miles, passing Kwantien and reaching Ngou Min, where officials greeted us at the gates of a beflagged city. There the magistrate who was our companion had his home, and we were his guests for the night. By name Shih, he was a man of no little culture, and his spacious dwelling contained many treasures of art, among them some wood carvings of great beauty; but what surprised me most was to find a grand piano in the *salon*. What it had cost to bring it there I hesitated to inquire.

Trade was prospering in Ngou Min, said the magistrate, who received us at dinner. He discoursed agreeably concerning local matters, and warned us that on the morrow we should face a difficult stage of our journey, for we must cross the hills through the Pass of the Cold Blast. This spot is famous for its terrible winds, which come without warning and sweep away man and beast. The local authorities had done what they could to build shelters for travellers, but even so the place was to be feared. When the coffin of Yang Tseng-hsin was being borne by that route the escort were surprised by a storm and forced to abandon it. The coffin had lain untended for days upon the snowbound desert till the weather cleared and it could be recovered.

Next day, by way of the Erh-tao Bridge, we approached the pass. Many walled shelters stood on either side of the roadway, and on the hill-top was a temple dedicated to the God of Winds. At the temple gate was a wooden board on which were carved the words: 'Blessings upon this Border,' written by the Emperor Kwan-hsü. We were indeed blessed upon our journey, for though the cold was terrible the weather was calm. In fact, there was not a breath of wind that day.

Nevertheless, that it may be known what perils were spared us, let me quote from the works of Ke Heaou-lan, a noted scholar of the time of Chien-lung, exiled for two years in Urumchi, who has written thus concerning Cold Blast Pass:

'The place cursed by the God of Winds and by devils of which Sen Chiao Shu makes mention in the time of the Tang Dynasty would appear to lie in a district now called San San Hsien not far from Turfan. Here in the desert the traveller may often hear voices which call his name. But let him forbear to answer, or he may never again be found. There is, moreover, a Cave of the Winds upon the southern slope of the hills from which a violent blast may rise without warning. Before the coming of the wind you may hear even at the distance of many miles a great noise like the roaring of waters, upon which there follows the great wind itself, though the channel along which it sweeps may be no broader than a single mile. Indeed, a swift runner may sometimes escape from the path of the blast by running clear in time; but if there can be no escape, then must the drivers of carts take their strongest ropes to bind carts and horses together, by which means they may be saved, though the wind in passing will rock them like boats upon a stormy sea. But let a single cart or a man alone be caught by the blast and they will be whirled like fallen leaves to places unknown. For the most part these winds are from the south to the north, yet after a few days they may blow back again as though they might be the outward and inward breaths of a living creature. Once it is recorded an officer of the army, one Lai-tin, was blown away with horse and baggage and never heard of more. And again it is written that one day in the place called Chang-chi there descended suddenly from the heavens one who was later found to be a prisoner named Hsu-chi from the district of Fukang. Now if the records of Fukang be compared with those of Chang-chi it may be seen that in the space of two hours this man had been blown by the wind for sixty miles. And in answer to questions the prisoner Hsu-chi stated that he was like one half drunk, half sleeping when he was borne up by the wind, that his body kept on turning like a wheel, that his eyes were unable

to open, and that ears and mouth and nostrils were choked with sand, so that he might snatch a breath but rarely and then only with great care.'

As to the literal accuracy of the record the sceptic may well feel doubtful, for all its circumstantial air, yet it is truth to this extent, that it gives a striking picture of the fear with which Cold Blast Pass was regarded in olden times. In general the phenomenon would appear to resemble the American tornado which so often inflicts terrible destruction in a small area.

We paused for lunch at the village of Tou-li, having covered only thirty miles. The road was now very difficult, a mere track climbing amid barren and boulder-strewn mountains, huge granite formations towering out of the snows. We pressed on to Ye-mah-to, a distance of twenty-five miles, and after a brief rest proceeded an equal distance to the Tao-tou Mountain, at the foot of which a Kasak chief came out to bid us welcome. 'The French Expedition stayed at my house,' he said proudly, 'and you too shall be my guests for the night.' From what he said later I gathered that only the Chinese members of the Citröen Expedition had stayed with them when returning to Nanking; the Europeans had never been on this road.

We were compelled to refuse his invitation, for we were still far short of our schedule for the day. Pushing on, we descended into the plains. There was no longer any snow, and I saw for the first time the real Gobi. The sands stretched dismally to the horizon, level and unbroken; as far as sight could reach there was no living thing to be seen.

The sands were firm, however, and we made good progress. As dusk was falling we came to the Temple Valley, having travelled a hundred and ten miles in the day.

The valley was a mere fold in the sands. At a cluster of huts an aged army officer with a dozen soldiers under his orders acted both as innkeeper and as the representative of civil and military power. In a room specially cleaned for us we were shown a 'kang' or bank of dried mud to serve as a bed. In a small stove sheep-dung was burning; a poor oil-lamp gave forth what passed for light. Having left us for a few moments, the officer returned with a coarse mat, which he spread upon the

kang, proudly displaying it as a last touch of refinement contrived in our honour.

We asked our host what we could have to eat. He answered, 'Mutton.' 'Have you any rice or bread?' we asked. Once more he answered, 'Mutton.' I could not at first understand what he meant by this, but it slowly dawned upon me that mutton was his sole diet, serving as meat and bread. The men at the post bred their own sheep and their only care in life was to ensure a supply of salt. In Temple Valley mutton and salt, year in, year out, was almost the only food to be had.

So we dined off mutton. It was served in a dish without chopsticks so that we fed ourselves with our fingers. A little of our own bread still remained to us, though by now it was very stale indeed, and with this we eked out our meal, agreeing as we ate that wearisome as the thought of perpetual mutton might be, at least the meat was of first-rate quality.

When we had eaten the officer approached us.

'Perhaps,' he said, 'you would like to speak with the capital to announce your coming?'

Then to our great surprise he led us to a telephone.

The next morning in starlight and bitter cold we again faced the desert, a barren wasteland, chilling alike to blood and soul. My hands and feet grew numb as we jolted along, my face was once more painful. For close upon a hundred and fifty miles we saw no single sign of man's existence. Then at a small township the magistrate came out to meet us and we were conducted to the house of a Moslem merchant, the only building of any consequence in the place. So terrible was the cold that on alighting I found that I could scarcely stand.

At dinner that night, after a main course of pillau, managed by hand, we had our first taste of the water-melon for which the province of Sinkiang is so justly famed. Since they have a means of preserving this delicacy the Moslems can serve it summer and winter alike, and it grows in such profusion that they give it freely to any traveller, asking only for the return of the seeds. These they enjoy cracking in their teeth as much as the Americans enjoy their chewing-gum.

As we dined the magistrate was eager to inform us of the importance of his district. Near by there were many signs that oil was to be found. A party of Germans and Swedes had come to investigate possibilities, and some Russians had

even started operations on a fairly large scale. There were also hot springs, he told us, and traces of placer gold.

Since our host was a Moslem there were no beds in his house, so we slept upon carpets laid upon the floor. In the morning we were roused for an early start, and after nine hours of travel we reached Sui-lai, a town of growing importance. We had passed Yen-tsi-hai, famed for its oil and alluvial gold, and had crossed the long bridge over the Manas River. The soil was now more fertile and there were more frequent signs of human activity. At Sui-lai we were accorded musical honours, for the two officers of the guard who accompanied the magistrate had got together a band.

After a brief exhange of civilities we pressed on thirty miles to Hu-tu-bi, where we passed the night, and by noon the next day we were at Chang-chi, the town upon which the prisoner Hsu-chi descended suddenly as from the heavens, having been blown there by the winds of Cold Blast Pass. Our journey had been uneventful and monotonous, and though we had endured a good deal of minor discomfort we had feared that things would be much worse. Save for the thawing of frozen petrol in the mornings and occasional delays through choked jets, there were no troubles to record.

We were now on the outskirts of Tihwa, having reached the airfield of Ti-ao-pu, only fifteen miles from the city wall. The road was now excellent and we could see on a hill in the distance the twin pagodas which are the famous landmark of the city. Soon the low walls were in sight and we could see the people crowding out to meet us. After thirty-six days of travel I was now in the heart of Sinkiang, that region so vast that in olden days it was known as 'thirty-six countries'. My journey was now at an end. Here before me lay the mysterious city of Urumchi. It had, I was aware, a dark history, but I was full of hopes for its future. Had it not been rechristened Tihwa—or 'City of Enlightenment' by a Manchu Emperor? In my humble zeal for the good of our people I was determined that it should justify its new name.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRAGEDY OF YANG

'The Republic is raw with youth. The wars of the Five Kingdoms, the battles of the Seven Heroes—they fight them over again—but what care we how they fight?
'For I have made an Earthly Paradise in a remote region.
'The Moslems of the south, the nomads of the north—I will rule them to live contentedly in the ancient ways.'

YANG TSENG-HSIN

(From a scroll hanging on the First Gate of the Governor's yamen, written by Governor Yang after fifteen years of rule)

THE WALLS of Tihwa make a circuit of eleven *li*, that is, rather less than four miles. There are seven gates in all, two facing each point of the compass except the north, on which side there is only one. These gates are narrow and rounded, admitting only one stream of traffic. The wall is about fifteen feet in height and is of baked clay, reinforced by stone. It is wide enough to be easily manned by soldiery, and there are frequent embrasures in the parapet. In colour it is a dull ochre, a drabness which blends with the surroundings. Nevertheless, the provincial capital is far from drab; the Urumchi River gives fertility to the soil, and in summer the green of the trees delights the eye. From the pagoda of the Red Temple, situated upon a windy eminence to the north of the city, the course of the river can be seen, bridged at this point by the rough highway to Tacheng along which we entered. To the south-west lie the Tien Shan or Celestial Mountains, whose peaks when I first beheld them were white with snow. Through a pass to the south runs the road to Turfan; eastwards the great range continues, rising in height, to culminate in Bogdo Ula, the Holy Mountain, black crags surmounted by three sharp summits, frowning upon the peaceful city. Northward lie the great plains, where the meandering river loses itself first in marshland and then in barren sands. This region is the vast Dzungarian steppe, where between marsh and desert are herded the huge flocks which supply the wants of the capital.

Fully one-third of Tihwa lies outside the walls. Entering from the north the traveller first passes into the Chinese city;

then comes the Moslem city, still within the walls; lastly, on the far side, lies the Nan Kuan, the 'southern suburb', where the Russian merchants dwell. On my first crossing of the city I was struck by the contrast between one quarter and the next. In the Chinese quarter all was familiar to me, the walled yamens, the neat wooden houses, the seething bazaars. This was China as I knew it; but within a distance of a few yards I was plunged into an alien atmosphere. Here was the vigorous life of a city of the southern steppes, where Turk and Tartar meet—the mosque, the market, the endless rows of stalls. And passing beyond the fortifications I came into another world, the bare spaciousness of a Russian market town, the walled compound of the Soviet Consulate serving as its focus, from which it straggled to the south.

The most prosperous businesses in the city are in the hands of merchants from Tientsin families, the descendants of soldiers who came to Sinkiang when the great rebellion of 1868 was suppressed by the Peking Government. No matter how troubled the times, these shopkeepers still contrive to keep in touch with the East, and they can always offer for sale a wide variety of goods. When the difficulties of communication are allowed for, their persistence must be praised, and though their prices for luxuries are often very high they are never out of proportion to the costs of transport. Yet in spite of the brave show these merchants make, Tihwa remains a backward city, more like a mere market town than a provincial capital.

At first sight, after days of desolate journeying, I was pleasantly surprised by the size and activity of the place, but I soon found its disadvantages. Every morning our servant had to go and purchase water at a spot outside the city before we could perform our ablutions and make our tea. Nor were we fortunate in our servants. The cook explained that he had been an actor and had turned to cookery only when his efforts upon the stage were not appreciated. For all we cared he might well have reverted to his previous profession. Our quarters were bitterly cold and the stove refused to draw; sometimes the dregs of tea would freeze almost before one had set down the cup. As for the bodyguard assigned to us, they were confirmed in their laziness, for their only duty appeared to be the hanging out of the flags every Monday when there

was a ministerial meeting. They attended these, but never saw any business transacted. There were the three ceremonial bows, the most solemn re-reading of the last testament of Sun Yat Sen, and the rest was silence. This document is greatly respected by the Kuo-min-tang, since it is a dignified and moving enunciation of the principles upon which the movement is based. Its reading is intended to preserve the purity of party doctrine and to serve as a stimulus to action. We did not at this period perceive the least sign that the second intention was achieved.

After our first relief at having reached the end of our journey had passed away, it slowly began to dawn upon us that we were cut off from the rest of the world. Most of all I felt the dearth of news. There is only one newspaper in the whole province—a journal which bears the imposing name of the *Celestial Mountains News*. It purports to receive information by telegraph, but the telegrams were never dated, and I soon realized that the happenings recorded in the 'celestial' columns were all of distant date, and probably inaccurate to boot. The postmaster, Harald Kierkegaard, was a Dane, and two of his staff were natives of Fukien, my home province. I therefore endeavoured to get from him some English newspapers, but when I received them they too were months old. It was a great joy to me to receive a letter from my wife, which I was told had travelled quickly, having taken only fifty-six days on the journey.

On New Year's Day the Governor gave a great feast, which seven members of the Soviet consular staff attended. The consul brought news of the happenings in the outside world, for they had their own wireless station. Presenting his compliments and good wishes to the Governor, he said that Sino-Soviet relations had been restored on the 12th of December and that provision had been made for the amicable settlement of all disputes. He enlarged upon the help which Russia could give to China, especially in the matter of communications; he suggested, too, the possibility of financial aid and the sending of technicians to start new industries. He little knew when he spoke to us at that peaceful gathering what the future had in store for Sinkiang; nor did he realize in how short a time it would be military assistance we were needing.

That day our heavy luggage arrived from Tacheng, the

driver having been overtaken by a terrible storm in the Cold Blast Pass and delayed for some while. His frost-bitten hands and face were evidence of his ordeal and we realized that we had been fortunate, for he told a hair-raising story. The storm now swept down upon Tihwa and for days we had wind-driven and sharply frozen snow. There were never less than twenty degrees of frost and I was forced to abandon European clothing and change to my cotton-padded trousers and fur-lined robe.

Our luggage was searched by the police, which we were inclined to resent at first, but we were assured it was a mere formality and that all new-comers to the capital were required to submit to similar scrutiny. This event and several other minor happenings bred in my mind a persistent uneasiness. All was not well in Tihwa; the earthly paradise legend no longer rang true.

Even at the Governor's banquet, while we busied ourselves with the cold mutton, the fish, the ducks—and, best of all, the delicious pheasants, a great rarity, I was aware of currents flowing strongly beneath the jovial surface. I was therefore cautious in my speech and slow in forming friendships, but I came in time to feel that in the Minister of Industry I had found a man on whose good faith I could rely. Yen was a scholar and a poet. He showed me his poems, praised mine, encouraged me to talk of my aspirations, and produced for my perusal his eightfold scheme for the development of the province. His aims were well designed and clearly stated:

1. To build motor roads with soldier labour.
2. To build small factories to manufacture matches, candles, sugar, woollen goods, and thread.
3. To start schools of industry with departments of agriculture, factory-organization, commerce, and mining engineering.
4. To establish a Bureau of Mines and Agriculture to investigate mining and irrigation possibilities throughout the province.
5. To establish nursery gardens, with experimental plantations of fruit and other trees. (This scheme was well advanced, and already some 600,000 trees had been planted.)
6. To establish a central organization for the buying and selling in bulk of grapes, cotton, furs, and leather.

7. To start work at once upon the gold mines of Tacheng, Altai, Yutien, and Chemu; the copper mine at Beichen; and the iron-ore deposits of Fuyuan, thus gaining funds for the development of other projects.

8. To start work at once upon the oil-field of Wu-su, in the hope that through the competition of local production the Soviet petrol importers might be forced to drop their prices.

It was a matter of some grief to Yen that his scheme did not receive the attention and support which it most undoubtedly merited, and as our acquaintance ripened he did not disguise from me his opinion that the province was misgoverned. Already he had addressed a letter to the Governor, moderately expressing his concern.

> 'According to the words of the sages of the Sung Dynasty [he had written] there are two occasions on which a man keeps silence, first when he fears that the expression of his forebodings may be unwelcome; second, when he sees his fears justified, by which time speech is useless since it is already too late. How wise is the man who is boldly outspoken in the first instance, rather than he who hoards his wisdom till the time of its proper use is past!'

Wisdom too often goes unheeded. A wiser and far greater man than Chin Shu-jen had already come to an ill end through neglecting the warnings of the honest and sagacious Yen. Later I heard the whole story, which I now set down in full —having checked it from numerous other sources. It is a strange and darkly tragic history of a great ruler who was betrayed by the single flaw in his character, the one ill deed of his life returning to exact ironic requital.

History repeats itself in Central Asia. With the stories of Ghenghis Khan and Timur to inspire them there are always soldiers of fortune ready to start Islamic revolts. In 1868 Yakub Beg, an adventurer from Andizhan, raised the standard of Islam in Sinkiang, and eventually set up an independent state in the province. He was a destructive force with little administrative ability, and when the tale of his misdeeds became known in Peking an army was sent to crush him. So great were the difficulties of the journey that it was two years upon the road. The general, a soldier of great ability, sent

an advance guard to plant crops which would be ready for harvesting when the main body arrived. He also planted lines of trees to mark a route, knowing that the return journey would be equally hazardous. Slowly he closed in upon the rebels and after several years of fighting order was restored. Again in 1895 there was trouble, but now wiser counsels prevailed and the warlike Tungans were pacified, their chiefs being given Government positions so that a considerable measure of self-government was assured them. For the remaining years of the Ching Dynasty there was peace, but with the coming of New China in 1912 it seemed likely that unrest would once more afflict the frontier province.

But now there came upon the scene a figure so remarkable that no history of Sinkiang can be written without the story, in some detail, of his achievements. Yang Tseng-hsin was some years before the advent of the Chinese Republic a magistrate in Kansu, a post which he had filled so honourably under the old régime that he was known by the common people as 'Yang-ching-tien', which may be translated by the phrase 'Yang is our blue heaven'. A scholar of repute, having gained the highest honours in the Peking examinations, he was not only steeped in the philosophic principles of good government laid down by our classic authors, but had also the strength of mind necessary to apply them. By ceaseless diligence he had dispensed unswerving justice to all men, and his reputation stood high not only in his own district but also with the central authorities. There were many Tungans in the area he administered, and he had a complete understanding of their customs and ways of thought. He was therefore chosen to be Tao-tai at Aksu in the south of Sinkiang, and when in the course of the 1912 revolution the Governor at Urumchi abdicated, Yang, who held the position of Commissioner of the High Court, took over administrative duties.

He was then about forty-six years of age, strong of body, round and placid of countenance, never leaving his desk till the last of the day's documents was attended to. But the situation when he assumed control was so grave that few thought he would succeed in mastering it. Almost at once there was a revolt at Ili in the west where the Kuo-min-tang 'party men' proclaimed independence. Yang had no troops on which he could rely, but he knew the minds of Chinese

party politicians and was an adept at diplomacy. Trading upon the mutual rivalries of the leaders, making all possible concessions to their dignity, and basing his appeal upon his known fame as a just ruler, he won over the rebels without bloodshed. Following upon this first triumph he never faltered, but slowly increasing his hold upon the province, he ruled with such strength and wisdom that for seventeen years, while wars raged in the outside world and Republican China was torn by conflicting factions, in Sinkiang there was absolute peace. The province came to be known as 'The Earthly Paradise'—which reputation still existed at the time of my leaving Tientsin and doubtless played a great part in deciding me to undertake the journey.

Unfortunately, by the time of my arrival devils had entered paradise; but the information that I collected concerning past years made it plain that the fame of the Governor had been no legend. Yang had no interests save his work and the study of statecraft on which his success depended. Though a scholar, he was no poet; and the writings which remain as evidence of his genius are cold and accurate in style. Music and the arts made no appeal to him; he cared little, it would seem, for wife and family; but his passion for work absorbed him, and no detail was too small to engage his attention.

In the large inner hall of his yamen he sat at his desk among his subordinates, each of whom could approach him without hindrance to receive instructions. No matter how late they laboured it was a fixed rule that every letter received must be answered upon the same day. Nor would be delegate powers of decision to others, relying on his amazing memory to guide him through the vast mass of facts which his officials accumulated. It was not, however, his policy to rely upon the unsupported word of his subordinates; and he let it be known throughout his territory that any man who had cause for complaint might communicate directly with the Governor. His shrewd mind was quick to see whether a complaint was based on some real injustice or whether envy inspired it. In the first case, the oppressive official would be at once dismissed from his service; in the second, he would ensure that sharp correction was administered to the malicious tale-bearer. So uncanny was his perception of truth that soon no man dared lie to him.

As his mastery of the people increased, his least wish came to be accepted without question. Sven Hedin, who saw the effects of his rule, said that nowhere upon the earth did there exist a more absolute ruler. The old Catholic Father, a gruff German, who served the Church at Urumchi, said to Yang one day during an audience, 'Governor, there's not a bed-bug from here to Kashgar has a headache without your knowing it', which was not far from the truth, so perfectly was the intelligence service organized.

At first his appointment was merely temporary, and since he had no powerful friends at Peking, there came a time when the President of the New Republic was urged to supersede Yang and appoint in his place some influential official. But Yuan Shih-k'ai, first president of the Chinese Republic, had seen the reports which Yang sent with meticulous regularity to the Central Government. They were concise, accurate, respectful, and bore upon every sentence the stamp of a fine mind. Yuan knew better than to dismiss such a man. 'There is not one of you can come near him,' he would say to officials who coveted the appointment. 'This Yang has the greatest mind in China to-day!'

During the Ching Dynasty it had been accepted that Sinkiang must be subsidized, for it was essential that the province should be controlled, and the revenues were insufficient to cover the expense of administration. From Republican China Yang received no subsidy, but so skilfully did he organize the collection of taxes that he was able to build up an unrivalled official service, and so fair were his levies that none complained of them. First, it was known that the money did not go into the pockets of unscrupulous collectors, but was spent for the common good; secondly, in return for their contributions the merchants gained assurance of safety, so that trade flourished. Robbery was soon almost unknown. In his journal, sixteen volumes of which are in existence, page upon page of thin rice paper inscribed with a fine scholar's hand, Yang lays down the principles upon which his suppression of robbery was founded. Men steal, he says, either from want or from avarice. He who steals from want will cease to do so when from the common prosperity his wants are satisfied; he who steals from avarice is deterred only by certainty of punishment. When a theft occurred Yang would write to the

magistrate from whose area it was reported, giving him seven days to arrest the thief. Failure meant dismissal; on the other hand the whole weight of the provincial government, with its excellent dispatches and speed of action, was at the disposal of every magistrate for the execution of his duties. But the Governor did not merely suppress robbery; he endeavoured to ensure that no honest man need want for a living; and such was his success that soon the caravans went unarmed across the lonely deserts and mountains, and it was related that when a man with a wagon-load of gold bars and silver sycees (peculiar horseshoe bars of metal) paused to rest at an inn he would think nothing of leaving his wagon unattended.

Hardly had he stabilized internal affairs than the backwash of the European War broke upon distant Sinkiang. After the fall of Kerensky and the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in Russia there were still several White generals whose armed forces supported the old régime. One of these, Annekov, finally retreated towards Turkistan and with the help of the Tsarist consul at Tacheng continued fighting upon the frontier. In the meantime the Chinese Central Government had taken advantage of the confusion in Russia to push their troops forward in Outer Mongolia, and a strong force had reached Urga, the capital. There they were attacked by the White general, Baron Ungern-Sternberg, who earned the strange title of 'The Mad Baron' owing to his ghastly exploits. He massacred the Chinese, but the Red Army avenged them, finally establishing a Soviet Republic in Mongolia.

There was thus considerable confusion all along the frontier, and when Annekov, finally defeated, asked leave to retreat with his starving and typhus-infected army into Sinkiang, the Governor was placed in a difficult position. It was his policy to hold aloof from all outside struggles, and he feared Annekov and the Reds equally as having designs upon his province. The Central Government could not help him, and only the previous year he had been faced by rebellion from a Mongol prince, so he was still uneasy as to happenings in that quarter. This prince had first represented himself as a friend and had asked for arms to put down certain alleged rebels. Yang had sent them, but when the prince, encouraged by their arrival, himself raised a revolt he had found too late that the guns were provided with wrong-size ammunition. He had thus been

easily defeated, but successful as his stratagem had been, Yang knew that among the Mongols he had still powerful enemies.

Once more he adopted diplomatic rather than military tactics. Agents spread disaffection among the troops of Annekov, and induced them to disperse in search of food. When his army had been thus diminished the general was offered hospitality at Urumchi, which he was glad enough to accept, but on his arrival he was at once imprisoned. Yang arranged that the disheartened prisoner should have for companion a Chinese officer addicted to opium from whom he might acquire the habit. The ruse was successful, and once Annekov's health and resolution were undermined by the drug he was sent through to the neighbouring province of Kansu where the 'Christian General', Feng Yu-shang, was in power. The general turned his prisoner over to the Reds and Annekov was court-martialled and shot at Semipalatinsk. If Yang's methods appear dishonourable, it must be urged in his defence that he was striving with no weapon save his superior intellect to protect his province from the disaster of war in which it was in no way concerned. He had no designs upon his neighbours and sought only to maintain the integrity of his frontiers. This he succeeded in doing, and by the time that the Soviet authorities were in a position to make demands of him he had so far improved his own position that he was able to deal on equal terms. In later years he was proud to claim that during all the troubled period of his administration he had never once been forced to sign a humiliating treaty and that he had not lost one single square yard of China's possessions. 'These things have I done, not with soldiers, for I have none, but with the power of my mind and my pen. I have never troubled to create a large army, for it was clear to me at the outset that my army could not possibly be bigger than those of my neighbours, and if your army is not the biggest it is safest to have no army at all.' In these words he summed up his policy, which was always aimed at peace. The negotiations with the Russians were carried out on a basis of complete reciprocity, and for every consulate which the Soviet authorities established in Sinkiang a Chinese consulate was established on their soil in Central Asia. Thus Urumchi balanced with Tashkent; Tacheng, with Semipalatinsk; Kuldja with Alma Ata; Altai with Zaisan; Kashgar with Andizhan.

When it is remembered that at this period the whole of Outer Mongolia was passing under Soviet control the importance of Yang's achievement in preserving Sinkiang intact cannot be too highly valued.

Yet great as were his deeds and widely though his fame had spread, Yang was destined to die a violent death at the hands of his enemies; and as if to show the justice of the gods it was ordained that he should reap as he had sown. Once only in his long and upright life had he planned assassination, and years later that single deed of blood was to recoil upon his head. I now record the circumstances of that deed as they were related to me by one Chang, a countryman of Yang and his trusted subordinate, who was an eye-witness of the whole affair.

The first president of the Chinese Republic, Yuan Shih-k'ai, the same who had confirmed Yang's appointment in the face of advice to the contrary, planned at last to become Emperor, thus betraying his cause. Therefore a revolt was planned in the province of Yunnan, and the conspirators turned for aid to Sinkiang. Yang was himself a native of Yunnan and he had surrounded himself with officials from that province, so the rebels had hopes of gaining considerable support. But Yang knew that Yuan Shih-k'ai had been his staunch friend, and his philosophy was such that he cared little whether a ruler were called president or emperor provided only that he ruled well; also it was his fixed policy to hold aloof from intrigues in the rest of China. But though he would give no aid to the Yunnan revolt there were those around him who were fiercely in favour of their fellow Yunnanese and it was soon plain to the Governor that he could not count upon their loyalty. They meant no harm towards him personally but they were eager to give aid to the rebels, in doing which they would be involving Sinkiang in outside quarrels and bringing to ruin the policy which had guided Yang for so long.

One day there came to the Governor an aide-de-camp named Hsieh, whom he had formerly dismissed for dishonesty. This man now sought to regain his master's favour by bringing news of what the Yunnanese officials were secretly doing. He had been dishonest towards Yang, and was now betraying his associates. The Governor rebuked him publicly and had him shot in the courtyard of the yamen. Then calling his Yunnan

officials together Yang told them that the traitor Hsieh had slandered them and that he had been punished as he deserved. 'He wished to tell me that you, my friends, were in secret my enemies. See for yourselves in what terms I answered him. Rest assured that I trust you utterly. Return now to your posts and continue loyally with your work.'

The officials all thanked their Governor profusely and left his presence seemingly much relieved, but the slaying of Hsieh was, in fact, a ruse to deceive them. Yang knew that what Hsieh had said was true, but he had ordered his execution in order to allay the fears of the plotters and to assure them that he trusted them. Perhaps it was not wholly a trick which he had played, and he had hoped by declaring his confidence in his subordinates to regain their loyalty; doubtless his act was inspired by no single motive, but it is not possible at this distance of time to be sure. It is difficult to think that the upright Yang Tseng-hsin would indulge in needless bloodshed, and it may well be that he intended his words to serve as a warning as well as a trap. But those for whom the warning was intended did not profit by it, and the time came when the Governor was forced to act.

It was the Mid-January Festival. The Governor invited his officials to dine with him. The Inspector of Education from Peking was to be the guest of honour and the Sinkiang Minister of Finance, Pan, an elderly gentleman close upon eighty, a close personal friend of Sir Aurel Stein (who writes of him always as 'Pan Ta-jen'—i.e. 'His Excellency Pan'), was also there. The affair had every appearance of a formal function, and there was not the least suspicion in the mind of any guest that more was intended.

When the cups had been filled a few times the Governor suddenly rose and left the hall. This action aroused no suspicion since it was known that Yang cared little for wine. But in a few minutes he returned, followed by a soldier who held concealed behind his back a long curved sword. The Governor paused behind the seat of Hsia Ting, one of the principal malcontents. Then in a cold, even casual voice speaking typical Yunnanese dialect, he said: 'Behead Hsia Ting!'

The knife flashed, and Hsia Ting fell dead, his blood spouting upon the robes of those who sat at table with him.

All cowered in horror, none daring to move; but in calm tones the Governor reassured them.

'This has nothing to do with you. Come, more wine for my guests!'

When the cups were refilled the Governor again left the chamber, but almost immediately he returned, a second soldier at his side. Proceeding around the table they halted at the chair of one Li Yin, and once again the astounded guests heard the dread command. But Li Yin must have feared that his intrigues were known, for he leapt to his feet even as the blade swung upon him and fled from the chamber wounded, his assailant close at his heels. He did not get far. In a few moments screams from the outer hall told the remaining guests what fate had overtaken the second of their number.

The table was in confusion, blood was everywhere. The Inspector from Peking looked on, speechless with horror, the old Finance Minister Pan lay half-fainting in his chair. As for the Yunnanese officials, they sat petrified with fear, expecting at any moment that they too would meet an awful end. Hsia Ting and Li Yin had been two of the most trusted officers in the Governor's service, his own personal friends. Who then was safe if these were slain?

But there was no more bloodshed. Calmly the Governor resumed his seat at the table, called for more wine, and proceeded without the least trace of emotion to give judicial reasons for what he had done. Then, having spoken, he applied himself to the dishes which were set before him, and to the astonishment of the company made a hearty meal, finishing his two bowls of rice as usual.

Chang, who told me the story, was a guest at that banquet. He, together with the Chief of Police, went of their own will to the Governor and asked that their actions might be investigated, since though they had intended no evil towards him they had been in sympathy with the revolt in Yunnan. Yang ordered their imprisonment, but being satisfied as to their fidelity, released them in a few days. The agent from Yunnan who had incited the officers to disobedience was arrested and shot; and all the remaining Yunnanese officials whose fidelity Yang suspected received their dismissal, travelling expenses to their home province being allowed them. Once more the Governor reigned supreme.

Yet there were those who knew him well who said that from that time on he was never the same as of old, that there were moments when he repented bitterly of his deed. On the day of the Mid-January Festival he would refuse to grant any audience, and would spend the entire day seated alone in his inner chamber, seeking in meditation to purge his heart of his deed of blood. Outwardly, however, his conduct remained the same, and his application to his duties increased rather than diminished with the passing of the years. By the time of his sixty-third birthday he had so ordered the affairs of his province that, as I have already recounted, men spoke of it in Eastern China as though it were a fairyland, an earthly paradise.

Nevertheless, the end was near. I heard the whole story from one who was personally concerned at every stage of the events. Yen, my informant, was (as I have related) Minister for Industry in the province, which post he had held for fifteen years. In 1917 he had held an official position in Peking and had been appointed Tao-tai at Aksu in Southern Sinkiang. He was not willing at the time to accept the offer, so the Minister of the Interior went to the President, and asked that another appointment might be made. The choice fell upon Fan Yao-nan and although both the Minister of the Interior and the Premier, Marshal Tuan Chi-Jui, urged upon President Li Yuan-hung that his decision should be reconsidered. Fan, who had already held an official appointment in Sinkiang for some time, was duly appointed. It was he who, eleven years later, was to bring about the final tragedy.

Yang had always selected his officials with the greatest care. Any man who sought enlistment in his service would be minutely scrutinized by the Governor in person before the appointment was even considered. Having received an invitation to present himself before Yang Tseng-hsin, the applicant would be ushered into a darkened room where the Governor would greet him in silence, seated in a high-backed chair. There the two men would sit, only a table between them, while sometimes for an hour the Governor would study intently the features of the new-comer to his service. When he was satisfied, a courteous gesture of dismissal would bring the silent interview to an end. No word had been spoken, yet so great were Yang's powers of discernment that he knew all

that was essential about the man. If the verdict were favourable, appointment would speedily follow; if the man had not passed the test he would never see the Governor again and after weeks of wearisome waiting would return whence he had come.

The principles on which Yang made his choice he drew from his study of ancient philosophies. A student and disciple of Lao-tse, he regulated his whole life by the precepts of that school of thought. In the evenings he would read aloud in his private chamber, and so clear was his voice that all who worked in the outer halls of the yamen would hear him. Officials and servants alike would listen with respect to the sound of that voice communing with the wisdom of the ages, and the whisper would pass through the ranks of the guards: 'The Governor is reading.' In some strange manner all who were around him drew deep satisfaction from the thought that their master was consulting his masters. A sense of security came to them as they heard that steady flow of inspired words.

Fan was a modern, ambitious official, with little sympathy for the wisdom of the past and a strong sense of his own ability and importance. He had been educated in Japan and had imbibed much that was entirely foreign to the mind and temperament of Yang who distrusted him on sight and, though he had been appointed by the Central Government, to whom the Governor always paid due deference, refused to receive him.

A month went by, but every day Fan presented himself at the yamen, and at length, contrary to his usual principles, the Governor relented. Fan was appointed to another less important post, a grievous setback to his hopes. He made some progress, however, for Yang was quick to recognize ability. Yen, my informant, who by this time had arrived in Urumchi as Minister of Industry, told me that the Governor made considerable use of Fan, appointing him first as Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, and then as Tao-tai at the capital, a post of very real authority; but Fan still harboured a grievance and repeatedly asked to be permitted to send in his resignation. This the Governor refused to allow for what reason is not altogether clear. Fan was useful, it is true, but an unwilling officer can hardly be a good one. Perhaps the truth was that

Yang felt that this possible rival was best kept under close observation, and that he might do great harm if allowed to return to the Chinese capital.

Yen told me that the Governor often spoke with terse humour of the position. 'I keep Fan like a chained tiger,' he would say; and when Yen remarked that there were dangers attaching to such caprice, and that tigers were awkward beasts to handle. 'Not to a tiger-trainer,' the Governor would reply, and indeed he had good claims to that title.

Early in 1928 came the Second Revolution and the Kuo-min-tang won their way to power. This involved a widening of democratic government and the appointment of local committees to assist the Governors. Yang gave his support in theory to the new régime, but he was too old to learn new ways of ruling. It was his policy to give meticulous lip-service to the Central Government, but in fact to go his own way in all essential matters. He was ready to see that representative councils were appointed as the new Government prescribed, but he was quite clear in his own mind that he would continue to wield the power.

Realizing, perhaps, that the voice of Fan upon a Government council might raise issues unwelcome to him, Yang omitted the Tao-tai's name from the list of those chosen to serve. Fan was furious at this insult, the more especially since he had been for some years an active supporter of the Nationalist Movement and had the clearest claims to preferment. From that moment he meditated sedition, but it is to be doubted very much whether he would have taken extreme measures but for his memory of the manner in which Yang had once before suppressed revolt among his followers. It was the story of that fatal dinner-party which decided Fan that he must strike first or suffer the consequences. In the meantime, however, Yang had mellowed. So sure was he of his power after years of absolute sway that he did not take any special precautions.

It would appear than Fan hatched his plot at secret meetings held in the private garden of the local Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It chanced that his greatest friend was the Dean of the Russian Language School, and he saw how this fact might be made to serve his purposes. A graduation ceremony was soon to be held, and Fan arranged that some ten of his personal

henchmen should attend it disguised as students, with revolvers concealed in the sleeves of their ceremonial robes. For the actual assassination a released felon was hired. The plan was simple, accomplices were few in number, and no hint of what was afoot came to the Governor's ears.

On July 7th 1928 the ceremony was held. The Governor and all the other officials had accepted invitations and the Russian Consul-General had also consented to be present. Only two of them had any foreboding that all was not well—Yen, my friend, and a certain Lieutenant Tu. They both sought a means of declining the invitation, but the strict rules which govern official courtesy in China made this impossible.

During a dinner-party at his home Yen recounted to me the events of that fateful day, and on returning to my quarters I made an immediate record of them while all the details were fresh in my memory. What follows may therefore be trusted as an exact account of what occurred.

When the Governor had concluded his speech to the assembled students he was asked to pose for a photograph. While this was being done the keen eyes of Lieutenant Tu noticed that there were strange faces among the group, but the Dean assured him that all were students, and he had no reason for mistrusting the Dean. The ceremony completed, Chin Shu-jen, Minister of the Interior, a pupil and protégé of the Governor, left the gathering to resume his duties, but the remaining officials were entertained at a banquet.

The guests sat at three tables. The Governor, his staff, Yen, Lieutenant Tu, and a professor of Chinese, were at one, while at another the Soviet Consul-General and his wife were entertained by Fan. The staff of the school sat at the third. In an adjoining room the Governor's bodyguard were invited to dine. It was a day of intense heat, and Fan had no difficulty in assuring them that the formal ceremony being now concluded they might lay aside their arms, which were at once surreptitiously removed.

The Governor was anxious to leave as early as possible since he had duties at the Military Academy; he therefore asked that the dishes should be speedily served. In spite of this request there were delays. Yang was, however, in the highest spirits and in a moment of unwonted unbending was playing 'finger games' with his neighbours. Suddenly Chang, the

Dean of the school, entered with a new bottle of wine which he set down upon the table with such vigour that all eyes turned towards him, pained by such rough manners in the presence of the Governor.

At that moment Fan asked: 'Are the other wines all ready?' to which the Dean replied: 'All is prepared.' Fan then raised his cup towards the Soviet Consul-General to drink his health, and as their cups met, shots rang out simultaneously, all aimed at the Governor. Seven bullets in all were fired and all reached their mark. Yang, mortally wounded, but superb in death, glared an angry defiance at his foes. 'Who dares do this?' he questioned in the loud voice which had commanded instant obedience for so many years. Then he fell slowly forward, his last glance resting upon the face of the trusted Yen, as though to ask forgiveness that he had not listened to the advice so often given to him.

The seven bullets soon took effect. A faithful aide-de-camp rushed forward to help his master, but a further shot rang out and the young officer collapsed, mortally wounded, while Yang, whom he had been in the act of raising, sank down upon him.

When they saw what had happened the high officials stampeded for the door. The Russian Consul and his wife took refuge in the lavatory. Lieutenant Tu was shot, and Yen, who was wounded in the shoulder, only escaped by feigning death. As he lay beneath the overturned tables Yen saw Fan standing over the sorely wounded but still breathing Governor, revolver in hand. Two further shots completed the crime.

Feeling that his own chances of escape were slender indeed, Yen turned on his side and attempted to crawl away; but the movement was noticed and one of the conspirators fired at him once again, this time wounding him in the thigh. Not daring to move again, he lay very still, expecting every moment to be slain.

At length when all was quiet and the horrified guests had dispersed, Yen again tried to escape. Glancing up he saw that he was no longer noticed, for of the two assassins on the scene one was searching Lieutenant Tu's uniform for arms and ammunition, and the other was bending over Yang, attempting to detach from his belt the bunch of long Chinese keys which

never left the Governor's person. They gave access to the vaults and archives, so were of the greatest importance.

Seeing himself unobserved, Yen rose painfully to his feet and made his way to a side door, only to find himself confronted by an armed conspirator who threatened him with a rifle.

'Why kill me?' asked Yen. 'You see I am old and wounded. Doubtless I am crippled and shall remain so all my days. What good will it do you to slaughter me?'

The appeal was successful, the man looked ashamed and lowered his weapon. But just as Yen was escaping, the man returned and threatened him once more, as though doubtful where his duty lay.

'I see we are born enemies,' said Yen sorrowfully. 'Shoot, then—do your work quickly. No man can fight against fate.'

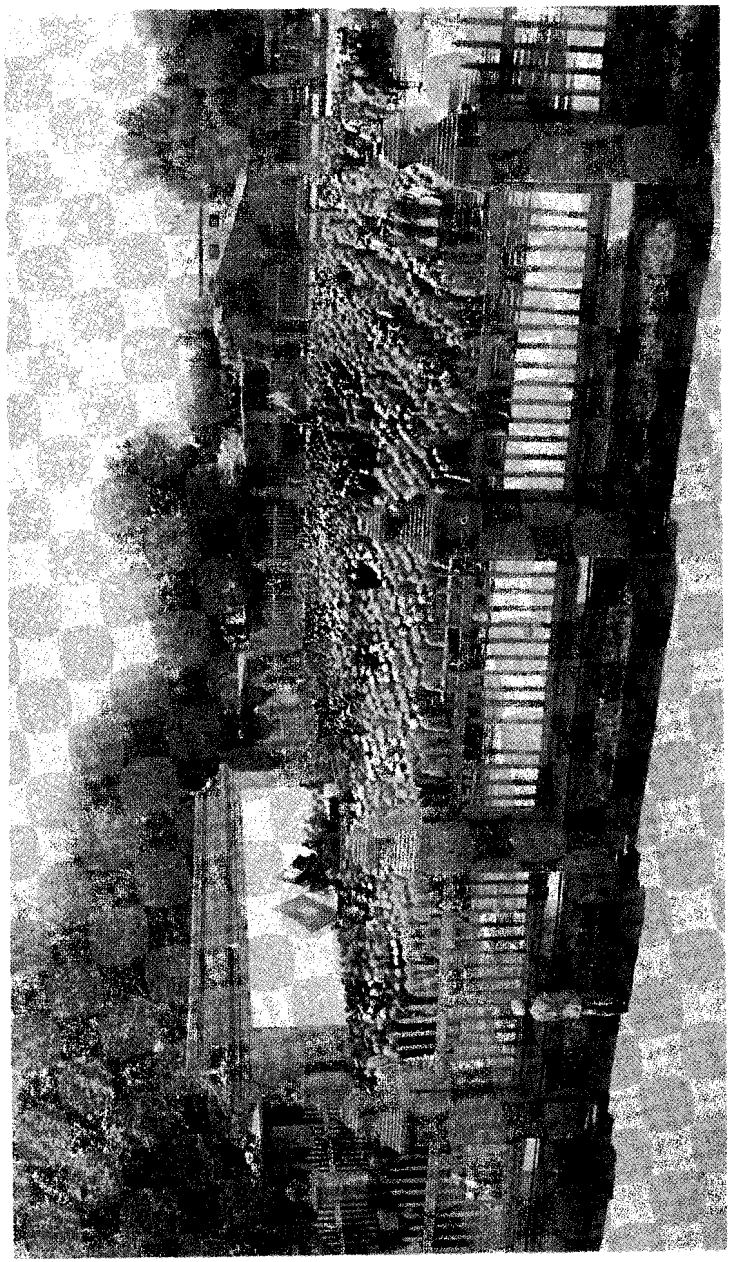
But a second time the conspirator lowered his rifle, and now, when Yen left the building, he did not follow.

Making his way to the students' dormitory, Yen lay hidden there, listening to the shooting, which continued still from time to time. Lieutenant Tu's troops were now rushing to the scene. News of the Governor's death had spread and the troops thought that it was the work of student revolutionaries. They therefore wanted to shoot all the members of the college and blow up the building.

But when they broke into the dormitory and found Yen, whom they knew, he was able to explain what had happened and thus to avert the massacre and destruction which threatened.

Fan, having left the Law School, went with his followers to sieze the Governor's yamen. The guard at the entrance challenged them and was shot dead. Penetrating to the 'San-tan' or third compound, the Governor's head-quarters, he seated himself in the official chair and attempted to write a letter summoning Chin Shu-jen, then Minister of the Political Department, and next in authority to Yang. Fan's hands were shaking so badly, however, that he could not hold the brush (the Chinese pen) and one of his accomplices had to write for him.

Chin Shu-jen received the message, but Chang Pei-yuan, head of the Military Department, who was with him at the time, urged him not to go. Acting with great promptness,



OPEN-AIR MEETING AT KULDJA: GENERAL CHANG PEI-YUAN (ON PLATFORM) SPEAKING

Chang gave orders to the troops to besiege the Governor's yamen, and Fan, seated in the inner office, saw that his followers were few in number and realized that his plans had miscarried. At first the besieged made some resistance, but at length their ammunition was exhausted. They therefore surrendered, and within four hours of the first shots, which had announced the outbreak of the *coup d'état*, all was over.

As the Governor's Deputy, Chin Shu-jen ordered Fan to be brought to trial.

At first Fan would not admit that he was the instigator of the conspiracy, claiming to be merely an accomplice; but when all the other conspirators had confessed, he was silent. Ten of his followers were executed, and Fan was then put to death, some say by torture. This was all done within a few hours.

It was thought at first that Yen had been slain along with the Governor and Lieutenant Tu, but when he appeared, supported by one of the soldiers, all the people of the neighbourhood cheered and wept with joy and surprise.

The bullets remained in Yen, as I have related, until the Citröen Expedition arrived in 1931, bringing with them a surgeon, who performed the necessary operation with a Chinese assistant. It was a jest current at the time that the expedition had accomplished nothing of any value except the removal of these bullets.

This then is the story of a tragic episode in the history of Sinkiang. The affair was afterwards spoken of as the 'Double Seven Incident' since it occurred on July 7th 1928—that is, the seventh day of the seventh month of the seventeenth year of the Chinese Republic. Yen, who was very superstitious, attached great importance to these figures, and related to me that Yang had often predicted that his sixty-third year was threatened by disaster according to the astrologers. Several people said to me that for days before his death Yang had appeared uneasy, whether because of the fortune-tellers' prediction I do not know.

On July 3rd Yang had suddenly ordered my friend Kwan, then a young official, to go at once to Peking to bring back his eldest daughter.

'Return within forty days,' Yang had said, and Kwan had left with all speed, only to be halted two days later by a

telegram cancelling his instructions. Within another two days came the news that Yang was dead.

Yen assured me that on the eve of the *coup d'état* the dogs in his yard barked all night for no discoverable reason. He got up several times to find out the cause, and was greatly troubled by the omen.

On the next day he was very loath to go to the reception, but his friends urged him to be present, saying that the Governor would be displeased at his absence. Yen then tried to foretell his luck with the dominoes and the results were bad. He was thus confirmed in his disinclination to attend the ceremony, but was so much laughed at by his friends that at last he consented to go. I am not myself a believer in omens and the like; but one last fact must be noted.

Concerning Yang's death it was widely spoken in the city that a prophecy existed: 'He who slays at a feast shall at a feast be slain.'

There remains one fact to add. During my travels in Europe I have heard a good deal concerning the barbarism of Sinkiang. The critics of my country were quite right in what they said. Let me admit freely that in the recent history of Urumchi there is much that is terrible. I am myself bitterly ashamed that there should occur on Chinese soil events which approach in horror to the Russian purges, the assassination of Dolfuss, and Hitler's infamous July 30th purge.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STORM GATHERS

'Winds round my upper windows say
Mountain rainstorm on the way.'

POPULAR RHYME (Tang Dynasty)

KWAN, HAVING DELIVERED the official seals, obtained leave to go to his home at Kuldja. We were sorry to see him depart, for he had been a good friend. We had been welcomed with great cordiality and many official feastings, but now we tended to be left very much to ourselves. Doubtless as emissaries from the East we were suspect; at all events I, who had been appointed as adviser to the Governor, Chin Shu-jen, was not received by him, the excuse being that pressure of official duties prevented it. While I awaited instructions I employed my time by collecting information concerning the capital and the province, so that when the Governor was ready to discuss matters with me my plans would be prepared.

The fundamental authority concerning Sinkiang is the great encyclopaedia, which I had already consulted in Peking. It consists of one hundred and sixteen volumes in the Chinese style and its twenty-nine sections cover in great detail every aspect of life in the province. I was fortunate in gaining access to this series of books and found them of immense interest. They were compiled during three years of strenuous work, and Governor Yang himself acted as one of the assistant editors. The only drawback to the *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Sinkiang*, as the work is called, is that it was ended in 1910 and does not go further than the Manchu Dynasty; but so little does the Far East change that much of the information is still quite up to date.

A new encyclopaedia for the Chinese Republic, as distinct from the old régime, is now being compiled under the direction of 'Tung-tze-Kwan'—that is the 'Complete Record Office', a bureau staffed by very competent scholars; but there is at present little sign that their labours will soon be committed to print.

Pei and Kung, who had been sent by the Kuo-min-tang Party to widen its influence in Tihwa, a duty in which I was not involved, also encountered apathy and even obstruction. At night, when the stars, brought nearer by the clearness of the frozen air, seemed to hang like lanterns close above the huddled roofs of the town, we discussed the position. For my part, I was determined not to be drawn into matters with which I had no concern. It was my business to act as adviser to the Governor on social and industrial problems, and to use the administrative experience I had gained during years of Government service to reorganize and extend Chinese control of these far-off territories. Already I had begun to realize what a formidable task I had undertaken, and it was plain to me that my zeal for social betterment might not be shared equally by all who were in authority. Nevertheless, I was resolved to proceed with single-minded persistence in the discharge of my duties and to avoid all entanglement of intrigue, concerning the existence of which I soon had evidence.

Not only was there unrest among the Moslems of Hami (which each day was reported at last to be pacified) and signs of trouble among the Tungans even nearer the capital, but there was also strong, though cautious, criticism of the Governor from Chinese elements, since his actions were becoming increasingly misguided and autocratic. One day I dined with a scholarly official who had been appointed to compile a new encyclopaedia of the province. He told me that his work was hampered by the fact that so many necessary books and documents were either lost or damaged and, further, that he could not obtain sufficient assistance in his task. He was inclined to pessimism concerning the future of Sinkiang, and Li Hsiao-tien (Laughing at the Sky), a Chinese pilot, who was present and who had recently flown back to Tihwa from Turfan, gave us first-hand news of the trouble there. This was no mere riot, he said, which fact I had guessed despite official deprecations, but a concerted movement of the tribes, based on very real grievances. He had seen the manifesto which one of the leaders of the revolt had published. It was printed in both Chinese and Turki and was the work of some one with clear political understanding.

The fact that men of substance and education were involved

in the revolt was very disturbing. History shows that few revolutions have succeeded without the aid of the merchant classes. It was pointed out to me that in the rebellion of 1866 one of the most powerful forces was a rich merchant, Ma Yuan-chang, who was induced by the religious fanatics to lend his wealth and skill to their cause. He massacred all the Chinese in the city of Sui-lai and proclaimed himself Emperor there, holding out long after the rest of the rebels were subdued. When the town was at last invested, it was only after six months of heavy fighting that a breach was made in the walls. Ma Yuan-chang was executed, but his deeds were not forgotten. The man who told me these things had known in his childhood, one Hsu Hsio-kun, a Chinese farmer, who had been prominent among the attackers at that last assault. Even now, he told me, the wife of the rebel chief was still living, though of great age; and his son had become District Magistrate of Wu-su. At once I recalled the official who had greeted us during the journey through that town, an elderly but very courteous Tungan, peaceable, just in his dealings, a very competent administrator. It was something of a shock to think that this man's father had been renowned for his fanatical slaughter of the Chinese, and the fact brought home to me the truth to which so many signs were pointing, that the whole province was a powder mine of religious hatred awaiting only a chance spark.

Little by little I pieced together the history of recent happenings and was able to commit to paper a connected story of the Hami revolt. The first trouble had come at Turfan in 1930, in the third year of the governorship of Chin Shu-jen, when already the first-rate administrative machine which Yang had created was beginning to falter and break down beneath the touch of a less worthy successor. Turfan must be one of the strangest places in the world, I fancy, but its strangeness is not perceived at first sight, and it is only after some days of sojourning there that the senses are oppressed and bewildered. South-east of Tihwa the road enters the foothills of the Tien Shan and soon is winding amid barren, ungainly, and precipitous mounds, with the eternal snows of the Holy Mountain, dark Bogdo Ula, towering bleakly to the north. The road, though it twists and turns amid the heights, does not itself climb and presents no obstacles to the traveller

save the roughness of its surface, and in winter the transit of frozen torrents, through whose treacherous ice giant boulders show many a jagged edge. Soon the defiles are passed and there comes a stony plain, on the edge of which, where the hills again begin, is the fort of Dawan Ch'eng. This is the key to the passage of the mountains from the south-east and is an important strategic position in the defence of the capital. The two halves of the name derive from different languages, 'dawan' (often corrupted into 'tapan' by the Chinese) meaning in Turki, a mountain pass, while 'ch'eng' is Chinese for city or citadel. This name, and others like it, are symbolic of the closeness with which Moslem and Chinese peoples are mingled in Sinkiang.

After a sharp descent from the 'Citadel of the Pass' the caravans file across another stretch of desert, whose rolling yellow mounds and ridges seem like waves of the sea, and then with little warning comes the last ridge, the land falls away abruptly, and there is a view of the 'Turfan Depression', an expanse of desert, dotted by fertile and flowering oases, which though situated close to snow-line mountains, themselves an offshoot of the great ranges which are the roof of the world, sinks in its lowest regions to a level of one thousand feet below the sea.

Sir Eric Teichman, a traveller laconic and unimpressed, tells that his aneroid barometer began to play strange tricks as his caravan descended into the Turfan plain; but the human nerves are apt to play tricks too on this queer journey. Sir Eric, however, omits any mention of this, and the fierce heat which pours down upon this sheltered region at the height of summer is probably equalled in few other places in the world.

Every household has its cave dug in the courtyard—not as as air-raid shelter, but as protection from the sun. In the hottest months they make their mud bed and their kitchen underground—nor do they emerge till evening, for the hot wind burns like flame. All the work of the village is done at night by the light of oil-lamps. The market often goes on all night long—while in the daytime the streets are deserted, every one having 'gone to earth' in the caves. This is wisdom born of long experience. The hot wind is worse than anything that can be imagined, shrivelling the skin, scorching the eyes; and the direct rays of the sun carry death. It is a proverbial saying,

not much exaggerated, that the people bake their dough cakes by sticking them on the walls of the huts.

Almost as bad as the extremes of heat are the extremes of cold. In early August the hot winds cease gradually to blow, and within a short while the icy wind from the north sweeps the plains. Snow falls early in autumn and remains till late spring.

Turfan is an ancient Turki city which despite the periodic erasures of war still retains traces of its royal past—the crumbling walls of forts and palaces. Now it is a prosperous centre of commerce, with a thriving bazaar, and a market where merchants come from all around to purchase corn and cotton, and the dried grapes for which the neighbouring oases are justly famed. It is during the heat of the day a placid and slumbering city, mosques quivering in the burning air against blue skies from which rain never falls, the inner rooms of the shops like black caverns when seen from the glare of the dusty street. In the cool of the dusk the crowds assemble, coming together first at the muezzin's call to prayer; they are shrewd and peaceful merchants, indolent perhaps, better bargainers than workers, but with no murderous fire in their glances, and much given to laughter and song. But their ancestors were those who came with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other; and these bold Sons of the Prophet have handed down to their descendants a terrible heritage of hate. When once some slight on their faith is seen or imagined they are turned to raving fanatics, capable of any deed of blood and shame.

The grand old Governor Yang knew their minds with all the quiet certainty of a wise father who watches his children. He knew that as traders there was nothing they loved so well as a long wrangle followed by the striking of a complex bargain; he knew, too, that they had all the good merchant's respect for just dealing. Of other aspects of their character he was no less aware, and he strove always to keep his relations with them on the civil plane. Firm in his rulings, he nevertheless paid scrupulous attention to their petitions, gave them fair measure of self-government, dealt strictly with any Chinese official who discriminated against them, avoided the least suspicion of infringement upon custom or faith, and when punishment was needed, inflicted it upon guilty individuals, never upon the

innocent mass. In this way he had avoided serious trouble throughout the whole period of his rule.

But for only two years after his death did this peaceful state of affairs endure. During the quiet time prosperity in the oasis of Turfan had steadily mounted, and as the Mohammedan merchants gained wealth and power the more necessary was it for a hand as firm as Yang's to control them. With that strong grasp lacking they soon began to plan mischief, and at length an Ahun, that is, a religious teacher, formed a conspiracy for the overthrow of the Government and the setting up of an independent Moslem state. His son learned of the project, and was so terrified at the thought of being involved in crime that he informed the magistrate who, however, doubtless as the result of terrorism, was persuaded to conceal from the authorities at Tihwa the true state of affairs. He announced that the Ahun's son was mentally afflicted to attribute to such good citizens as the leading Moslems designs upon the safety of the city. Thus the nervous Chin Shu-jen was reassured, and the conspirators gained time to proceed with their plans.

Knowing, however, that they were now under suspicion even though no action was taken against them, they decided on an immediate rising. On the frontier of Sinkiang and Kansu various sections of the Nanking army were posted, and the Ahun sent to the commander of one of these, a young lieutenant, by race a Tungan, asking for help in the cause. So confidently did he write that this officer became convinced that the whole province was theirs for the taking, so with less than a hundred followers, he rode across the desert towards Turfan.

However, word of his movements came to the officer's commander, an able young general, Ma Chung-yin, who though barely out of his 'teens had already several campaigns to his credit, and had made himself the sole authority in the whole of Western Kansu. Though he himself was a born adventurer, he objected strongly to his subordinates indulging in adventures on their own account, so he ordered that the Turfan enterprise should be stopped, and other detachments from the outposts rode to cut off the deserters. Having fought off his pursuers in a series of desperate skirmishes, the young lieutenant, Ma Shek-ming, made a long detour through the desert, but so great were the hardships of the journey that of

his original force only twenty-seven survivors entered Turfan at his side.

Even so, he did his best to stir up the town, and urged the garrison commander, Ma Fu-ming, a Tungan, who had hitherto kept clear of the plot, to join him. From what happened afterwards there would seem to be some truth in the story that Ma Fu-ming hesitated while waiting to see how things went, and that when he saw that the Government were preparing for strong action he told Ma Shek-ming that the time was not ripe and that he must retire to the hills till the right moment came. At any rate, in 1930 the revolt petered out, and after a few minor engagements peace was restored.

Proper handling at this juncture might have saved the situation, but Chin Shu-jen appears to have had no understanding of the dangerous forces with which he was dealing. After his fall from power this Governor was accused of many crimes, but I knew him fairly well and incline to the belief that defective judgment rather than a will to evil was the flaw in his character from which the historian will trace his failure. He was alternately over-sanguine and over-fearful; he was by turns too lenient and too severe. He must have guessed that Ma Fu-ming was implicated in the plot, yet allowed him to remain in office, where he was a dangerous and powerful enemy; he must have known that the rank and file of the revolt were the tools of their leaders, yet he punished them with frightful cruelty, thus ensuring the hatred of the common people for his rule. For a while the district was peaceful, but with a garrison commander intriguing against the Governor, the robber bands of Ma Shek-ming lurking in the hills, and a powerful young Tungan leader, Ma Chung-yin marshalling huge forces on the border, it must have been plain to the slowest wits that there would be an outbreak before long. Yet Chin Shu-jen did nothing to conciliate his foes, but continued to goad them. Yang had met his end through careless unchaining of an apparently tame tiger; his successor had profited so little from experience that he was boldly tormenting a whole host of obviously wild ones.

During the year prior to my start for Sinkiang news from the province had been not only scant but conflicting. Nevertheless, while I knew that an element of risk attached to my

undertaking, I was fairly sure in my own mind that the worst was over and that order had been restored. But for this conviction I should not have attempted the journey, for I am an administrator, not an adventurer, and my task is not concerned with heroics, but only begins when the smoke of battle has cleared. When I look back on this period it is amusing to reflect how little I knew of what was before me. When friends mentioned alarming rumours of slaughter I smilingly told them that doubtless there was trouble in Kansu, but not in Sinkiang. They mentioned Hami as the centre of a revolt. I gently admitted that there had been trouble there, religious riots, and that sort of thing; even at one period, an armed revolt. But this last, I said, was the work of a Chinese general from outside the province, and since he was now defeated and his armies dispersed the danger period was certainly passed. It was thus that I spoke, all unwittingly, of a great figure whose path was to meet mine in dramatic fashion, and who was, though only a youth, to come near to changing the map of Central Asia and to carry war to the very roof of the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

HAMI THE CENTRE OF THE STORM

'It is easier to dam a mountain torrent than to stop the mouths of the people.'
TSO CHIU-MING (a contemporary of Confucius)

SUCH IS THE attitude of despair among some who write of racial and religious conflicts in Western China, that they write of the revolts which have at periodic intervals despoiled Sinkiang as though these were merely symptoms of an incurable ill. That such an attitude is natural enough I do not deny, but it is a very pessimistic view, and far from the whole truth. A more detailed account of the revolt at Hami, its origins, and the course of events pursued, may incline the historian to more hopeful forecasts of the future. Even in Central Asia war need not be considered the perpetual destiny of mankind.

Hami is the most important garrison town in the eastern area of Sinkiang, with an ancient history of prosperity tempered by warfare. In 1930, when the recent troubles began, trade was thriving and conditions appeared quite calm. It was true that Chin Shu-jen had summoned a Mongol prince from Karashar to Tihwa to ask him to fight against Hami and had executed him for disobedience under circumstances which suggest a high degree of unwisdom, if not of treachery, on his part; but there was no evidence that the population of Hami were much concerned. They were used to such quarrels among those in authority, and sudden death was the traditional ending of political brawls. Life went on much as before, and a prince, a general, or magistrate more or less was no cause for a riot, let alone a revolution. Chin Shu-jen, however, hastened to provide the cause.

From time immemorial a line of Moslem princes had reigned in Hami. The present descendant of the ancient house was a landlord on a large scale, his estates covering some forty thousand mow of land, about six thousand acres. The system of government was complicated, and taxation was a matter of custom rather than of law. The inhabitants paid taxes or did service for their prince, and they had no direct obligation to

the Central Government. That was the affair of the prince, who naturally evaded his obligations as far as he could.

Not all the princes had been good rulers, and in the first years of the Chinese Republic there had been a revolt against the monarchy. Governor Yang had suppressed the rebels, but had seen to it that the oppressive taxes which had occasioned the outbreak were lessened. It would have been easy for him at that period to have overthrown the Moslem rulers, but he was careful not to do so, since he saw that the Mohammedan population might be more easily governed by a prince of their own race, and, with his keen political insight, realized that it was a good thing that grievances at Hami should be laid at the door of the local ruler and not blamed upon Tihwa. Following this pacification there was peace for seventeen years.

In 1930 the Mohammedan ruler died, and there was some doubt as to the succession. Admittedly the administration of the district was not very effective, and the commander of the Chinese garrison urged Chin Shu-jen that now was a suitable moment for abolishing the monarchy altogether. Conditions of land tenure upon the prince's estates were in urgent need of reform, and it was not logical that a prosperous district should make so little contribution to the revenues of the province. These arguments convinced the Governor that the time for action had come, and he gave instructions that the new prince, Nei-tze-erh, and his chancellor, Yollbars Khan, should present themselves at Tihwa to make formal submission. At the same time a resolution was rushed through the meeting of Ministers at the capital that Hami should be divided into three administrative districts, Hami, Iho, and Iwu (the last two names being of ancient Chinese origin and dating from the Han Dynasty), while the new prince was to be appointed 'High Adviser' to the Governor and reside at Tihwa. The chancellor was to return with a body of Chinese officials and prepare a scheme for the redistribution of the land.

In theory there was little to be urged against the new proposals. The monarchy was a form of government little suited to modern conditions, and the record of the princes was far from good. Justice had been administered too much as a matter of personal caprice; taxation had been desultory and inequitable; modernization had been obstructed by ignorance,

prejudice, and self-interest. Undoubtedly there were many things at Hami ripe, if not over-ripe, for reform.

But what had been overlooked by Chin Shu-jen and his advisers was the fact which many governments, Great Britain among them, have found repeatedly in the course of history—that subject peoples obstinately prefer self-government to good government; further, that the monarchy had religious as well as temporal significance to the Moslems of Hami; and finally, that the peace of the last twenty years had been the work of Yang and had been maintained only by his striking combination of sagacity and equity. All these facts were forgotten, but even so there might have been some hope of success had the reforms outlined in theory been administered in practice. But Chin Shu-jen and his subordinates had none of Yang's passion for the just balance of the scales, and they saw in the proposed changes the means of dispossessing the Moslems of their well-tilled land rather than of confirming them in their holdings.

There was, of course, a great parade of official justice. A survey was made of all the prince's estates, and licences were issued to certain of the tenants giving them the right to continue ownership by payment of taxes to Tihwa; at the same time all the uncultivated land was thrown open to the Chinese under the system already in force throughout the province. A magistrate was appointed in each of the three districts and tax-collectors were installed in office; but the administration was now entirely Chinese and the Moslems soon had reason to believe that they were not receiving fair treatment.

In the first place there was an attempt to collect arrears of taxes, which no matter how correct it might be in law, was a most oppressive act; and while the Moslems were mulcted as from the commencement of 1930, the Chinese, partly on the ground that their lands were untilled and in part from sheer favouritism, were granted a respite from taxation for two years. Nor was this all; when, as the result of the troubles in Kansu, Chinese refugees came to Sinkiang from that province, the magistrate at Iho took advantage of legal technicalities to dispossess a large number of Moslems and hand over to the new-comers lands already tilled. The Moslems were awarded untilled lands as 'compensation', but these grants were made

in areas on the very fringe of the desert where the soil was barren. The whole business was sheer robbery only thinly disguised as law.

To the fury of the dispossessed classes was added that of the wealthy ruling circles who saw their prince detained by the Governor Chin Shu-jen under circumstances hardly differing from captivity, and their own influence undermined in every direction by the Chinese. These people, whom years of peace had made very wealthy indeed, joined with the peasants in protesting against the new dispensation, and a joint telegram of protest to which all classes were signatories was sent to Tihwa. The petition never reached its destination—why, it is hard to be sure; but there would appear to be grounds for thinking that the local magistrate suppressed it, either because he had exceeded his authority and wished to conceal the fact; or because he felt that news of unrest in his district would be considered a reflection on his abilities by Chin Shu-jen. Whether the Governor would have taken any action to remedy the injustices to which the telegram invited his attention is a matter of some doubt, but at least he would have been warned of the resentment which the 'reforms' had caused, and might have taken measures to put down the revolt in its early stages. In fact, there was neither removal of grievances nor adequate provision against revolt; but so peace-loving were the Moslem population (it is only the Tungans who are lovers of war) that it required an insult to their religion to spur them to action. Thus it will be seen that the outbreak at Hami was not an inevitable conflict but was fostered by every possible circumstance of exacerbation and neglect on the part of the authorities. As for the events which supplied the final spark to the powder mine, they were sheer madness, as their recital will make plain.

Yang had scrutinized with extreme care the qualifications of applicants even for the lower grades of government positions, but the enemies of Chin Shu-jen said that he thought only of appointing his personal adherents irrespective of their character or ability. It was not so much that he was by temperament unjust (as Sven Hedin would have it) as that he was afraid. Always he sought to bolster up his own authority, so that he preferred a bad magistrate who was his creature to a man of honour and wisdom who might possess a mind of his own.

His fears did not permit him to see that good government is the best guarantee of a ruler's safety, nor did he realize the paradox so admirably expressed in Christian philosophy that 'he who saveth his life shall lose it'. The fact was that by his very concern for his personal safety he prepared his own downfall.

The tax-gatherer appointed to Siao-pu in Hami was a young wastrel named Chang, who came from Chin Shu-jen's native town in Kansu. It was of the utmost importance that the start of a new administration should be in capable hands, and several of the Governor's ministers protested against the appointment, though in vain. Yen, especially, foresaw disaster; but even he was surprised at the speed with which it came.

Chang had no principle of conduct save the satisfaction of his own immediate desires. While this is a fairly usual thing with hot-headed youths, there are few of them in a position in which it can be done, so that most are preserved by circumstances from their would-be follies. But Chang was in a position of authority and had guards to enforce his will, and since his egotism was reinforced by ignorance and bad temper, he must have proved a thorn in the flesh of his district from the time of his arrival. Soon his conduct was a public scandal, but this was no new thing for the Moslems, and if he had stopped short at incivility, avarice, and riotous living these would have been smiled at as mere peccadilloes. But on a day of evil omen Chang laid hands upon a Moslem girl.

To what extent it was a case of love or whether there was an element of rape in the affair need not be debated here. Though the first possibility might awaken sympathy, and the second horror, both spelt disaster. To the Moslems any union with an unbeliever was unforgivable, an offence worthy of death. Whether Chang had honourable intentions from the start or whether his offer of marriage was made only to quieten the tumult which his seduction of the girl was causing, the fact remains that his conduct set the whole countryside ablaze with indignation and hate. Coming at a time when economic discontents were widespread, the scandal provoked immediate revolt. Unable to prevent the marriage, the Ahuns took an oath that neither of the pair should live, and on the very night of the ceremony, when much wine had made the guards

careless, they mustered a raging mob in the streets of Siao-pu, killed the sentinels, murdered bride and bridegroom under circumstances of the utmost horror, and seized all the arms at the excise post.

There were only some twenty or thirty rifles in their booty, but these were enough to start a widespread revolt. Murder spread throughout the district, and with every raid upon the military posts the supply of arms was increased. In Tuhulu and Laomaohu tax-collector and guards were slaughtered and their small arsenal seized, while the hundred or more families of Chinese refugees from Kansu who had been given the tilled fields were massacred and their heads buried in the soil of the farms. The amount of ammunition seized was very small, but it was enough to arm the rebels for a descent upon the old town of Hami, which soon fell. Once more there was a fearful massacre of Chinese citizens; but on the arrival of well-armed troops from Tihwa the Moslem insurgents retired to the hills.

These events took place in February and March of 1931, at which time the revolt was serious enough but still local in its scope. The next outbreak was at Chen-hsi (Barkul), and when the news arrived, Chin Shu-jen, feeling that a strong hand at the outset might result in complete suppression of the trouble, ordered that the Government troops should proceed to the town and act with the utmost severity. Of his council, Liu and Yen urged appeasement. The revolt was checked, they said, and it was best not to stir it up by harshness. Once the Moslems realized that surrender would not save them from reprisals they would become desperate, and while the Tihwa forces were sufficient to deal with local risings they were far too small to deal with an inflamed province. But the Governor held that the dignity of his office had been impaired and that only the utmost harshness would re-establish it; so a strong force was dispatched against the Moslems under the Tao-tai of Aksu, whose right-hand man was to be the notorious Lieutenant Hsiung. On the approach of this army the Moslems were completely overawed and offered immediate surrender, but when they learned the severity which was to be shown them they had no choice but to resist, for it is better to meet death fighting than to await execution in cold blood. It cannot be denied that those who had committed atrocities were guilty of abominable crime and that many death sentences

were merited, but Hsiung had a reputation as one who lusted to kill, and the Moslems knew that were they to surrender no one would be safe.

At this time they did not realize their own strength, but once they had determined on bitter resistance they were overjoyed at the help which was offered to their cause. The neighbouring Kasaks joined them to a man, and the Tihwa troops found that instead of having merely a small district to occupy they were faced with guerrilla warfare on a most disconcerting scale. While pitched battles were avoided, they were harassed in minor engagements on all sides. The rebels lacked arms, however, and they were still no match for Hsiung's troops. He was able to inflict a good deal of punishment on more or less innocent populations, and their defenders were forced to withdraw to the hills.

Thus April passed. But by now it was clear to the Moslems that they could expect no mercy whatever and they turned to Kansu for aid. There was the great Mohammedan general, the young Ma Chung-yin, who was always ready for a military adventure and could hardly fail to support his co-religionists when they appealed to him for help. Two envoys now came to him from the distressed Moslems of Hami. They were Hodja Nyas and Yollbars Khan, Ministers of the deposed ruler.

At the time of their arrival the fortunes of Ma Chung-yin were at low ebb. He had failed in an assault upon Hochow and his army had been disbanded, while even had this not been so, the crossing of the Gobi with troops was no easy matter. Nevertheless, he accepted the appeal for help, and with a force of five hundred Tungan cavalry made an amazing dash across the desert. Appointed leader of the Moslem forces he at once attacked Chen-hsi and following upon the peaceful surrender of this town was able to seize arms and ammunition. He next advanced towards Hami, his force now greatly strengthened by Kasaks and Tungans, who were attracted by his fame.

The Tao-tai of Aksu, Chu, was guarding the new city while Hsiung held the old, and it was upon the bloodthirsty lieutenant that the first attack was launched. He wished to abandon his position, but his superior forced him to continue the defence. There were all the elements of fiction in the

six months' siege which followed: boiling oil, land mines, desperate defence of breaches, and the smuggled message for help. It is recorded that Ma Chung-yin made more than forty attacks upon the city and had sworn that even though fifty were necessary he would continue until it fell. His troops dug trenches and made barricades the better to assail the walls, and even tunnelled in an effort to undermine them. But they had too little powder to be willing to waste it in blasting, and the few breaches that their explosives made were hastily filled by bales of wool before the rush of attackers had time to reach them. In their direct assaults they used long scaling-ladders, which they climbed with the utmost bravery, but night and day a strict watch was kept and the besiegers never gained a foothold.

Meanwhile supplies were running low in the city, and all the cattle had been slaughtered. There was no oil for the watch-tower lights, and as each night the walls and streets were given over to darkness there was terrible fear. Oil was obtained by boiling down the cattle-fat, but soon this was also exhausted. As for ammunition, it had dwindled in spite of every precaution, and now most of the defenders were armed only with swords. At this point in the siege the old arsenal, built fifty years before by the far-sighted Chinese General Tso Chung-tang who reconquered the province, was opened and large quantities of fire-arrows were found, which were hastily put into use and enabled the defence to be continued.

One of the engineers who had accompanied the Haardt-Citröen Expedition managed to slip through the lines and inform Tihwa of the way things were going, but before any decision could be reached, Ma Chung-yin, with the invincible optimism of youth, decided that the siege was wearisome, and that far better tactics would be to make forced march to Tihwa and take the capital of the province by surprise.

The news that he was on the march threw Government and people into a state of alarm bordering on panic, and when outposts reported that he was approaching 'Seven Corner Well' (Chi Kio Ching), there was a hasty meeting of Ministers to decide how best they might defend the city. The Governor wished to assume personal command of the forces at his disposal, but his Ministers urged that he should delegate the duty to some more experienced commander, so my friend

Chief-Secretary Lu was made commander-in-chief with Sheng as his chief of staff. More than a thousand soldiers were mustered, but the long years of peace had resulted in much slackening of discipline, and Sheng reported in disgust that some of the troops hardly knew how to fire their guns. In these circumstances it was not surprising that the Government's advance guard were surprised in a night attack by the rebels and slain to a man, upon which the main body of troops fell back in dismay, having been ordered to burn all stores which might fall into enemy hands. But fortunately for Tihwa, Ma Chung-yin had himself received a wound in the engagement, and in spite of his success was surprised to find such numbers opposed to him. He therefore withdrew, and the capital breathed again.

Knowing that the respite must be used to the full, Chin Shu-jen sent an urgent message to Ili ordering immediate action, and conferred upon the general there the title of Chief Suppressor of Bandits in Sinkiang, but his troops were as ill trained as those of the capital, and at the least alarm would fire blindly into the night, wasting ammunition and betraying their positions. Nor was their commander, for all his high-sounding title, an experienced military man. He had been appointed to his position without training at a military academy or service in the ranks, and although a sufficiently able administrator had little notion of how to conduct a war. But by undeserved good fortune he had with him some two thousand White Russian soldiers, who were not only highly disciplined (except when they got hold of drink), but were marvellous fighters, fearing nothing, and riding with devilish bravery. These now advanced upon Hami, and for the first time Ma Chung-yin realized that he was faced by a trained and disciplined force. He therefore made off towards Suchow in the neighbouring province of Kansu, while the rest of the Moslems took to the hills, where, seeing that their case was hopeless, they made offers of surrender to General Chang, the Chief Suppressor of Bandits in Sinkiang. The terms proposed to the rebels required that they should give up all their arms by a named date, but as this time approached many of them made off into the mountains, once more fearful of what their fate might be if they were without their weapons.

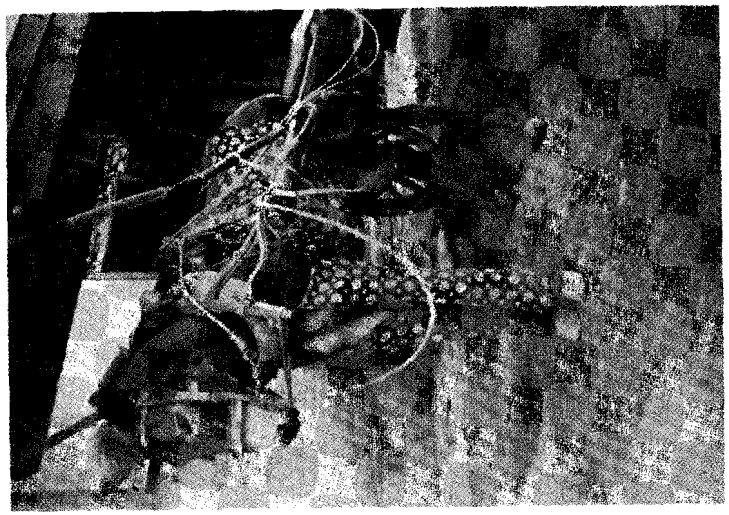
Ma Chung-yin was now back where he had started. He had

retreated to Anhsi with neither supplies nor followers, and though he pillaged the stores of the Citröen Expedition he was in no state to take the field. Moreover, there were old enemies of his in the neighbourhood who might well take advantage of his condition. Little beyond his reputation remained to him, but so dangerous was this that it enabled him once more to extricate himself from trouble.

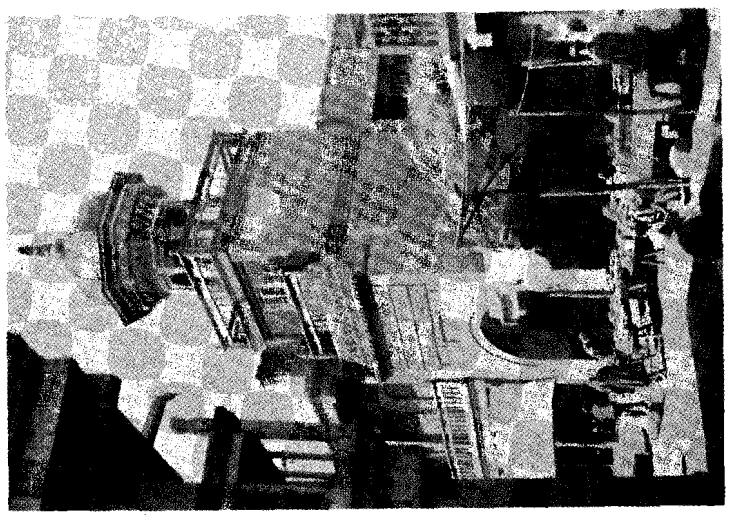
His old enemy, Ma Pu-fang, who had other troubles on his hands, viewed with some concern the return of Ma Chung-yin, and offered to make a deal with him. It was suggested that four districts to the west of Kansu should be regarded as his sphere of influence, and this arrangement suited him well enough, as it gave him time to rebuild his forces. But better fortune still was to come. The Nanking Government had sent a Pacification Commissioner to Sinkiang with instructions to end the wars between rival generals which were devastating the interior by inviting the better type of commander to enter the Government service—to which, in fact, most of them, by the exercise of those subtle arguments in which the Chinese mind excels, still professed to adhere. Ma Chung-yin found himself interviewed by the Commissioner and offered command of the 36th Division, the soldiers of which would be paid from Government funds. Good Mohammedan that he was, he must have thought for a moment that he had been killed in action and that this was Paradise!

Having accepted the offer with alacrity, he settled down to a period of watchful activity. He did not mean to strike again till he had strong enough forces to make the blow successful. That dash across the desert had been all very well, but it had landed him in a difficult position; so though when the inhabitants of Hami learned of the good fortune which had come to their former ally and again besought his aid he did not rush to their assistance, but gave promises instead. This stage in the proceedings occupied almost the whole of 1932.

General Chang, who had taken command at Hami, was not much liked by the Governor Chin Shu-jen, and he was now sent back to Ili, his place being taken by the Tao-tai of Tacheng, Li Hai-jo. The new commander found himself with a good deal of stubborn guerrilla fighting still on his hands (although the districts were officially 'pacified'), and learned to his surprise that although Ma Chung-yin was not invading the



CHINESE CART: MULE NICELY DRESSED IN TROUSERS TO KEEP OFF FLIES



MOSQUE IN SOUTH SUBURB, URUMCHI

province in person, troops acting under his orders were helping the rebels. He therefore decided on vigorous action against them and advanced into the hills, but he did not know the difficulties of the country in which he was operating, so the Government troops lost their way and fell victims to a surprise attack. At the same time another Government column fled in terror from one of Ma Chung-yin's deputy invaders, and once again it appeared that Tihwa was in peril.

Chin Shu-jen had concluded a treaty with Russia, as the result of which he hoped to receive more arms, including tanks and aeroplanes. But it now seemed that this help would come too late to save him, so he decided to parley with the advancing forces and seek to buy them off. Negotiations were opened, and after the usual haggling it was agreed that on condition of retreating to their districts the rebels were to receive one hundred 'tan' of wheat and 40,000 taels of silver, while they in their turn were to surrender 2,100 rifles. When the wheat and the money arrived for distribution, however, a furious quarrel broke out among the various factions at Hami, and the Government troops took the opportunity of renewing their attack. Their opponents at once forgot internal dissensions in the face of the new peril, and after a good deal of fighting retreated southwards to Shan Shan where they massacred all the Chinese inhabitants and spread revolt once more.

Their dissensions had weakened them seriously, and it was not long before Hsiung was upon them. Having driven off the troops opposed to him, he obtained a list of every Moslem in the district who had at any time borne arms against the authorities, and proceeded systematically to execute them all. These reprisals were on such a scale that even those Moslems who had remained neutral felt bound to fight, and refugees from the district poured into Turfan where the Government Commander, Ma Fu-ming, himself a Tungan, at once revolted. He first telegraphed to Tihwa for reinforcements, which were at once dispatched to him. When they arrived they did not realize that the city was in enemy hands; they entered the gates and were shot down to the last man. Ma Fu-ming then forced the local Tao-tai to write a letter to Hsiung urging him to come. With little more than one hundred men the lieutenant at once made the journey, but so well was the secret of Turfan guarded that no hint reached

his ears of the trap into which he was being drawn. All his men were shot down, and he himself, captured alive, was tortured to death in public with every refinement of cruelty and vileness of method. From that moment the revolt spread far and wide.

This, then, was the sequence of events up to the time of my coming to the province, related in some detail because it appears to me important to prove that the trouble was not merely a recrudescence of race-war and as such hardly to have been avoided, but was fostered by misgovernment within the province and fomented by aid from without. The land reforms were not embarked upon in defiance of Moslem wishes but were, in fact, undertaken in response to appeals from the population, who were frequently oppressed by their princes. While warlike elements were not lacking among the Tungans and the Kasaks, the majority of the people desired only to continue their cultivation and their trading under conditions of justice and peace. They rose against the Provincial Government because their faith was tampered with and because ill-chosen magistrates were administering the law unfairly; they succeeded because the Government combined injustice and inefficiency. As for the final explosion, it came from a single act of misconduct on the part of an undisciplined youth who would have received short shrift from the wise and right-dealing Yang, but who was permitted by Chin Shu-jen to continue in a course of arrogance and stupidity. The revolt cost at least one hundred thousand lives, and its consequences in loss of trade and human suffering can hardly be calculated. But it was no upheaval of primal forces; it was the product of human folly, and human wisdom might well have avoided it.

CHAPTER SIX

TIHWA BESIEGED

'Your majesty—these are your children, who have stolen your sword only to splash in a pond.'

KUNG SUI (Han Dynasty)

NOW ALL THE capital was overshadowed by fear, a cold dread, sharper than the freezing air, which closed upon our spirits. There was danger both without and within, for at any moment the Moslem population of the city might rise against the Chinese. A strict curfew was enforced, and it was proclaimed that all who were found in the streets after nightfall would be shot at sight. Labour was conscripted without warning for defence purposes, and the Chamber of Commerce issued badges to its members to exempt them from such forced service. But the shops were closing their shutters, partly from fear of rioters, partly because supplies were failing. The capital drew its food supplies from the surrounding townships, and when the usual caravans did not arrive it was clear that all around us there was serious disorder. Those who did come all brought alarming stories of the revolt which was spreading to Nan-shan, the South Mountain. People who dwelt outside the city wall now sought to gain admittance, and there was serious overcrowding. As the crowds thickened, the speed of rumour increased, and every hour brought its story, the news being rarely good. One day I was told that all was well, for General Chang, in command of the garrison at Kuldja, had been summoned to defend the city. This might have been more reassuring to me had I not known that Kuldja was three hundred miles away, its forces a mere handful of men, and that a whole countryside ablaze with revolt lay between Chang and the capital. Soon I was invited to be calm, since the authorities had telegraphed to Nanking for assistance. They might with equal hope have signalled to the moon. The only reliable news which reached me was a secret message from a member of the Government who wrote that the rebels at Turfan had been defeated by the Government forces, but that a body of them were retreating towards Chi-chi-chao, only

twelve miles from the capital. The authorities had sent a force of cavalry to deal with them, and if these troops were successful the situation would be eased. But knowing the indecision which was paralysing our high command I did not feel in the least sanguine as to the result of this move.

Food was becoming scarce, and refugees from the South Mountain reported that the rebels were controlling almost all of that region, and that they were seizing the cattle of all who refused to join them. The only good news was that Sheng Shi-tsai, commander of the White Russian forces, had managed to reach Shan Shan, and that with him and acting as his second in command was Hsi, a Mongol prince from Karashar, and Commander Chen, who had just returned from Chen-hsi, to the north of Hami, with his Mongolian cavalry. Sheng was the officer of whom I have already spoken, who had gone to seek his fortune in Sinkiang a year previous to my own departure. He had already achieved a high rank, and we knew that it was largely on his skill that the fate of the capital depended. Soon he sent word from Turfan that he had reoccupied the city, and that the troops of the young lieutenant who had led the revolt were scattered; but Sheng added that he was apprehensive concerning the attitude of Ma Chung-yin, who although he had dissociated himself from the first revolt was now taking no action against the rebels. At the same time there came word that the Government cavalry sent to Chi-chi-chao had been caught in an ambush, suffering a severe defeat.

This did not worry me so much as the news that the attitude of Ma Chung-yin was doubtful. Although he was a mere youth he had already a wide reputation, and though his military prowess was admitted by all, there were sides to his character which alarmed all who knew of them. He was of Moslem blood, a Tungan, native of Hochow in the south of Kansu, and when only a few months over the age of sixteen was made an officer in the army at Sining. The interior of China was then in great disorder, and though various generals were on the march all avowing high-flown aims they were in fact little more than large-scale brigands, plundering the provinces they claimed to be liberating. Ma Chung-yin appears, even at the time of his first command, to have thought that this was a game at which he too could play, for as soon as his personal

dominion over his men was strong enough he marched on Hochow. He had no clear aims beyond the advancement of his personal ambitions, but he gathered a force of five thousand men and for the better part of a year besieged the town. He failed, however, in this first attempt, and took to plundering the countryside.

It is said that the Governor of Kansu took vengeance upon the rebel by executing his father, an act which bred in Ma Chung-yin an implacable enmity towards the Chinese. He was clever enough to disguise his feelings, however, and early in 1930 he made overtures to the Government at Nanking. Chiang Kai-shek, who was viewing with alarm the tactics of Japan in Manchuria, felt that the young rebel who now proposed to enter his service was first-rate military material, and was willing to overlook his previous conduct as the wildness of youth. He therefore admitted him to the military academy at the capital, but after a few months of studies the young commander was sick of theory and turned once more to practice. He reached Chung-wei on the Yellow River and there set about collecting an army. Many of his old troops were in the district, and such was his personal ascendancy that they rallied in large numbers to his call.

This force of personality was Ma Chung-yin's greatest gift. He was fearless himself and had the gift of command, but he was deficient in knowledge of strategy and his political insight was small. About this time, however, he managed to enlist the aid of a Turk from Stamboul, one Kemal Kaya Effendi, who became his chief of staff and advised him well in the arts of war. What this man was doing in Central Asia may well be questioned. It would seem that he was a fanatical Mohammedan who saw in the vast numbers of true believers between Samarkand and Kansu the makings of a new Moslem empire. Certainly he inspired Ma Chung-yin with thoughts of imperial dominion, and for the events which followed he must share the blame. So confused was the state of the interior of China at this time that it is very difficult to convey to Western readers the logic of events. Often they seemed to have none. Kemal Kaya Effendi, for instance, may be thought to have occupied a somewhat anomalous position, but he was not the only foreigner whom Ma Chung-yin attracted to his service. The Central Government at this period was served by German

military advisers (withdrawn later by Hitler when Germany openly sided with Japan), and every provincial general had on his staff self-styled 'experts' of varying nationality.

With Kemal Kaya to aid him, Ma Chung-yin organized his forces and moved on Kansu with a large army stated to have numbered between eight and ten thousand men. The Governor of the province appointed him commander of a division (there was probably no other course open to this harassed official), following which appointment Ma Chung-yin at once sought to increase his forces by conscripting all the available man-power of the province. Soon he considered himself strong enough to disregard authority, and commenced what was in effect independent rule, although always in theory professing allegiance to Nanking.

At last his insolence grew to a point at which it could no longer be tolerated and an army was sent against him. This was in 1931 and led to the abortive descent upon Hami which I have already described. Within six months Ma Chung-yin was in flight once more, and now took refuge among the Tungans. Arriving at Ansi in Kansu he plundered the stores of the Haardt-Citröen Expedition; but though he managed at this time to rally some remnants of his forces, he was unable to arm them, so it appeared that his bolt was shot and that he was no longer a menace to Sinkiang.

At length the retreating general arrived at Suchow, where he insisted that he was a loyal follower of the Nanking Government, and was appointed by them to the command of the 36th Division, which rank renewed his dwindling authority. This action on the part of the Central Government may seem peculiar to those unfamiliar with the scheme of things in China at this period, but it must be remembered that Ma Chung-yin had never openly rebelled against the Government, who were probably very ill-informed of his doings, and were in any case willing to regard them as personal quarrels between generals rather than as revolt against the State.

So far his story had been one long series of defeats, and it speaks much for his personal brilliance that continued ill success had not dimmed his reputation. Now, however, he appeared to have learned wisdom, and for more than a year he remained peacefully at Suchow consolidating his position. During this time he remained in contact with the Moslems at

Hami, and when towards the close of 1932 Ma Shek-ming again took the field it was doubtless with the tacit approval of his one-time commander. Ma Chung-yin was waiting till a favourable opportunity occurred, of which fact Sheng was well aware. Hence his report to Tihwa that the attitude of the Suchow army was 'doubtful'.

Readers of Sven Hedin will know that he speaks of Ma Chung-yin as 'Big Horse', and so famous has the young general become under this name that it would be convenient in some ways for me to adopt it in referring to him; but as a matter of fact I never once heard it used in Sinkiang, and I think the explorer must have coined it personally. To this extent it was justified, that since the word 'Ma', a contraction for Mohammed, means 'horse' in Chinese, the five Tungan commanders in Kansu and Chinghai were known as 'the five horses'. But I never heard the term 'big' added to Ma Chung-yin's name. In truth the reverse was the case, for in Kansu, where he first attained prominence at so early an age, he was known affectionately as 'Kar Shi Ling', that is, 'the small commander' (another possible translation is 'young'), which name, though in the dialect of the province, stuck to him ever afterwards. While he was besieging us in Tihwa we often referred to him as 'Kar Shi Ling'.

In the opening months of 1933 the 'young commander' was not in the picture so far as we in Sinkiang were concerned. Ma Shek-ming, the rebel, and Ma Fu-ming, the renegade general of Turfan, were the chief source of trouble, and it was their proclamation, a very able piece of work, of which the pilot informed us. He had obtained a copy during a reconnaissance flight and he had brought it back with him as evidence as to the nature of the revolt. In it the two conspirators, the first of whom announced himself as 'Advance Guard Commander', presumably a reference to the '36th Division' at Suchow, and the other as 'Commander of the Garrison', to which rank he was entitled, though it carried with the duty of suppressing revolt, promised that they would rule justly, and forbade under penalty of death any slaughter of the infidels. When, however, the hated Lieutenant Hsiung fell into their hands, he was tortured to death in the market-place amid public acclamation. Though the punishment was terrible, at least he had brought it upon himself. This fact,

however, did nothing to lessen official alarm in the capital when the news arrived.

Of Li, the pilot, I must at this point insert a word of praise. Each day, unless the weather were outrageously bad, he made a reconnaissance flight around the capital in a Russian aeroplane of none too modern design. I did not at that time realize what this meant in terms of skill and daring, but later I was told by Eurasian Air Line pilots what conditions were like over the desert and among the hills. Air pockets were frequent, and one pilot told me that to drop 2,000 feet as though down an invisible shaft was no rare experience for him on the Sinkiang route. As for a forced landing, the hills, which so often were veiled in treacherous mists, offered no chance at all, and though there was a good deal of flat surface in the desert, it often looked a good deal smoother from above than it actually was. Aerodromes were primitive, wireless communication usually non-existent and at best undependable; and though the rebels had no anti-aircraft guns there were sharpshooters among them who could hit any 'plane that came within range. Fortunately the 'ceiling' over Turfan was always high, but it was clear from the accurate information which Li brought back with him that he often took the risk of flying extremely low. Yet he never said a word concerning the difficulties he encountered, continuing to do his job with as little concern as though it were chopping wood. It was a great grief to me when at last he was killed.

I had arrived in Tihwa on Christmas Day. The feast of the New Year had passed in peace and it was early in January that Li brought the first disquieting news, which events around us soon confirmed. On January 29th the gates were suddenly closed, and at once there ensued a panic. It was not, however, till several weeks later that the war closed round us and we knew that we were cut off. Somewhere in the south Sheng was reported to be making headway against the enemy, but meanwhile our own situation grew more desperate every day. Food and water were scarce, refugees had swollen the population, and there were less than a thousand troops to defend the city.

The news that Sheng had recaptured Turfan cheered us considerably, but this victory proved in fact to be little more than a local advance. The troops of Ma Shek-ming were left

intact and made their retreat to the south, stirring up trouble everywhere, so that calls for help came in quick succession from Karashar and Aksu, to which the Governor could only reply by informing Sheng of the situation and ordering the garrison at Kuldja to move south to the relief of the beleagured towns. This move weakened the defences of Tihwa and did little to stem the enemy's advance. Meanwhile the tension within the walls was becoming acute, for refugees were of all faiths, and as they were crowded together there was every possibility that fighting might break out among them. Moreover, every Moslem was a possible spy, which fact increased our anxiety. Mr. Hunter, the benign and elderly representative of the China Inland Mission, who for forty years had worked unceasingly in Tihwa (not with much success so far as converts were concerned, but always for the general good), was very anxious when I called upon him, and confessed himself more apprehensive concerning racial hatreds within our walls than hostile armies without. He presented me with an English version of the Koran which became the companion of my tedious hours. On the night of this visit, having occasion to visit the yamen, I stumbled over the bodies of two 'Turbanheads' executed for murder. They had slaughtered a Chinese family—parents and three children of tender years.

The next news was that a Kasak officer in the south had been accused of complicity in the rising and duly arrested, his men being disarmed. Some of them, however, had escaped to Altai under the leadership of the brother of a certain Kasak prince, so it seemed that the revolt was spreading all round us and that soon we should be assailed from every side.

On the smudged pages of the *Tien Shan Journal* there now appeared a report of Commander Sheng's successes, which news was intended to revive our spirits. I found it very disturbing, however, since in the list of alleged booty was mention of ten cases of Krupp shells, five cases of hand grenades, and ten thousand rounds of rifle ammunition, all of most mysterious origin. It was certain that the enemy were well armed, if this were true, and the source of the weapons was a matter for interesting speculation to any one able to view our perils with a suitably detached mind.

I struggled to preserve detachment of outlook. Since I had as yet no duties to occupy me, I found it difficult to prevent

myself from brooding too much upon the dangers of our position, but I schooled myself to fatalism, and every morning when the servant entered my room to light the stove I was sleeping soundly. But at dawn on the 21st of February I was awakened by him with news of heavy shell-fire and knew that the war had now come to our very gates. I hurried to the roof-top, where I found my friends already gathered. North-west, above the Red Mountain Pit, the Yu-hwang Temple, little more than two miles from the city, was on fire, the glare of the flames mingling with the first grey light of day. Straining our eyes we could see large bodies of troops in movement, but whether they were defenders or attackers was difficult to tell. The spectacle soon wearied me, so I breakfasted calmly. At nine o'clock the guns roared once again, but I noted that they were no nearer. The rattle of machine-gun and rifle grew louder, however, and continued throughout the day. Soon came reliable news of what was happening. The enemy had advanced towards the city under cover of night and had attacked the Great West Bridge, which, after strong resistance, the Government troops had been forced to abandon to them. General Pai, who was directing the defence, had only seven hundred troops, but just as things had appeared desperate, a body of some three hundred White Russians, newly arrived in Tihwa and hastily armed, had flung into the fray, and it was their sortie which I had witnessed in the early hours of the morning.

The White Russians were splendid fighters, but they suffered from moods of savage melancholy in which they drank recklessly and would then tolerate no discipline. They were thus a source of anxiety at times, but it cannot be denied that without them Tihwa might have fallen. Their counter-attack which won back the slopes of Red Mountain was a triumph of disciplined fury. Opposed to them were fierce Moslems and Tungans, aflame with religious zeal and intent upon winning the paradise of true believers; yet the White Russians outdid them in boldness and wild endurance. On foot no less than on horseback they carried all before them, and on the second night of the fighting they were retaining the ground that they had won.

The conflict died down with the darkness, but there was great danger of a surprise attack in the night hours, and we therefore arranged for our guards to take turns at sentry duty

upon our roof. Under pressure of danger the authorities were acting with greater decision, and I retired to bed confident that nothing more could be done. Volleys of rifle-fire rang through the cold air of the night at frequent intervals, but I slept without interruption and awoke to hear the shell-fire once more, still no nearer to the city.

Later in the day the Government artillery replied to the attackers and my windows shook madly at each round. I still had no duties, so to calm my nerves I set to work making useful extracts from the *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Sinkiang*, of which I have already spoken. Strangely enough, despite the incessant gun-fire, the work absorbed my attention, and only when I paused in the late afternoon did I realize that the fighting was nearer. So far as I could judge it had reached the park on the outskirts of the city. The attackers were determined, I reflected, to advance even under the severe fire from the Government batteries.

The city was not yet completely surrounded and the pass of Dawan Ch'eng to the south-east was still held. A friend who came to assure himself of my safety brought word that the authorities had planned to withdraw the Government to some place of greater security outside the city—though for my part I could not believe that, imperilled as we were, any greater safety was to be had. For myself, I preferred the shelter of the walls, and the Governor appears to have shared this feeling, for he had sought advice from a temple oracle before making any move. The reply was to the effect that for those ordained to die flight offered no hope of escape, while for those fated to survive all places were of equal safety. 'Safe is the home and safe is the country,' said the oracle; 'but how shall one born for disaster seek to escape?'

The news continued bad. When the Great West Bridge was abandoned all the Government troops there had been slaughtered and much war material had been lost, and with it the enemy made a successful advance, gaining first Spider Hill and the radio-station and at last seizing Devil's Hill, which commanded the suburbs. From the roof I watched their movements, then returned to my copying. Conditions outside the walls were now indescribably awful, for thousands of refugees who had been refused admittance were caught between the opposing forces.

Outside the West Gate ran the 'Street of the Small Religion' —the Chinese in Sinkiang speak of their faith as 'big' and the Mohammedan as 'small'. In times of peace this street was one of the most prosperous in the city, but now it was crowded with innocent fugitives, whose plight was terrible indeed. There was worse to come, however, for now the advancing rebels came to this quarter and seizing the houses made loop-holes in the walls. On the flat roofs they set up machine-gun posts which could enfilade Government positions on either side of them. I could see for myself that the situation was desperate and that our troops would be penned against the walls. General Pai, who was in command, did not hesitate. He gave the order that the Street of the Small Religion should be set on fire.

Then followed a scene so frightful that to describe it is not possible. The reader's imagination must suffice. As the flames swept down the long lane of wooden structures they became an inferno of horror, for the roar of the conflagration was added to the rattle of gun-fire, and the hideous shrieks of those who were trapped. The rebels sought safety in flight, and as they crossed the open were machine-gunned from the Red Mountain; but the fugitives had nowhere to fly to and perished to the last man, woman, and child. Nevertheless the city was saved, and when at last the flames died down the approach to the West Bridge was strewn with the bodies of our assailants.

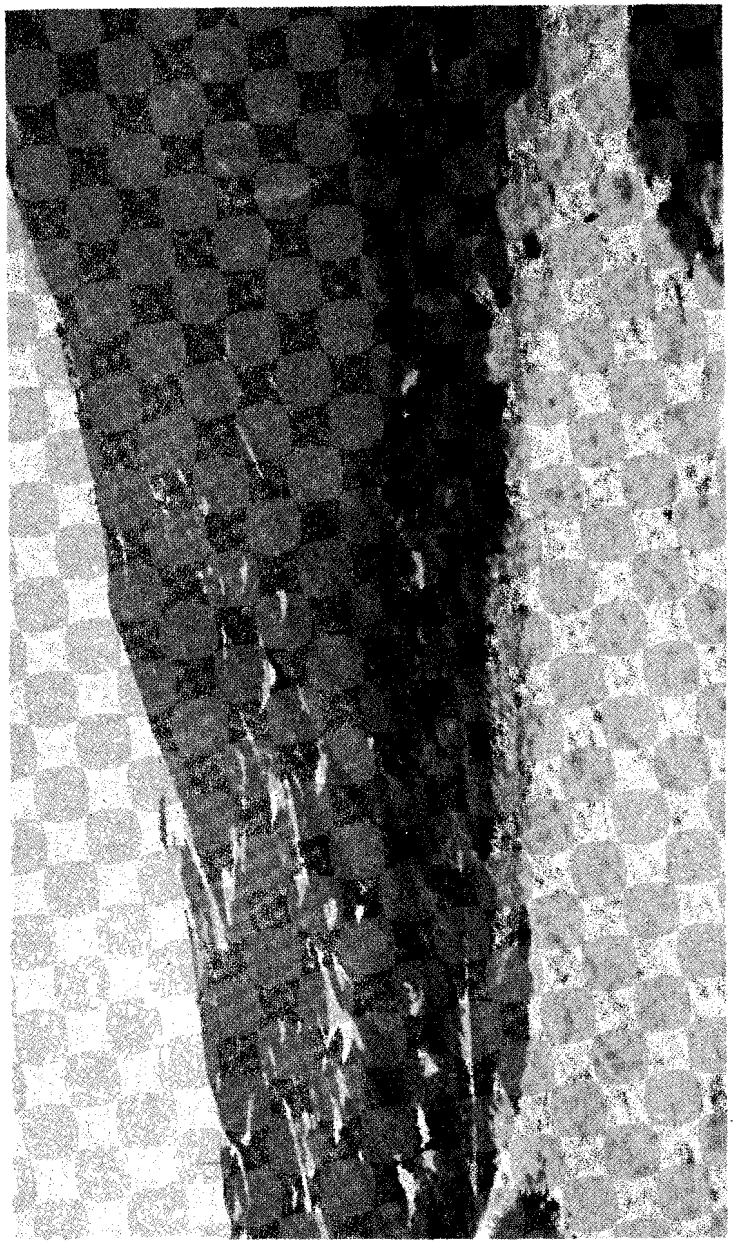
On the evening of the second day I had completed ten thousand words of copying.

I asked how many were dead.

I was told: 'At least two thousand.'

Once again I returned to my task, reflecting that a human life had been taken at every fifth word.

On the following morning the Government officials held a conference at the Kuo-min-tang building and then ascended the city walls to observe the situation for themselves. I talked with General Pai, who told me that the attacking force was less in numbers than had been feared, and that given resolute defence and no great accession of power to our enemies we might hope to hold out for some while. Already Sheng was on his way to aid in the defence of the capital; and though it was to be feared that the result of his withdrawal would mean



OVER A THOUSAND CORPSES, CHINESE AND MOSLEMS, GATHERED FROM GREAT WEST BRIDGE, A SUBURB OF URUMCHI, READY FOR BURIAL BY THE RELIEF COMMITTEE

more trouble in the south, if Tihwa fell there would be no hope of restoring order, even were help to arrive from Nanking. Much as I respected the bravery of General Pai I made so bold as to point out to him that since of the three million inhabitants of Sinkiang little more than one-tenth were Chinese, peace could only be had by generous treatment of our Moslem adversaries, and that no matter how fearful their atrocities, reprisals in like fashion could lead to nothing but continual war.

News came that Sheng was approaching and had defeated a large force of rebels who had been preparing to aid in the assault upon Tihwa. At the same time the White Russians brought off a fine piece of work when, learning that six hundred Turban-heads carrying scaling-ladders were marching to join the attackers, they waylaid them in a defile outside the city, and though outnumbered by three to one slew their opponents almost to the last man.

Mr. Hunter and Mr. Mather greeted me courteously when I called upon them and inquired as to the news. I reported that it was now more cheerful than for some while so far as we ourselves were concerned, but that in the province as a whole conditions were appalling. News from Wu-su to the west stated that there had been fighting at the aerodrome and that now the garrison were besieged; while at Karashar in the south the Tao-tai and his officials had been slaughtered and the insurgents held the town. A messenger from San-to-pa, twenty miles to the north of the capital, reported that of the thousand Chinese inhabitants in that district nine-tenths had been slain, and that huge stores of rice which normally would have provisioned Tihwa had been set on fire.

Our troops had recaptured the radio-station and the insurgents had fallen back. For some days now things were quiet, but the food problem was becoming acute. Meat had become unobtainable at the very start of the siege and now neither flour nor rice was procurable. Our meals consisted day after day of baked beans. Nor could we ever feel secure, for wandering bands of rebels roamed the hills, and after dark were capable of amazing boldness. Several were killed while attempting to scale the walls under the very mouths of the guns.

Commander Sheng having approached the city with his well-equipped and disciplined forces, the Moslems withdrew to the

hills, but things in the south were very bad, and rather than divide his army the commander called back his rearguard from Dawan Ch'eng, so that bands of insurgent guerrillas were able to seize the south-eastern pass. Tihwa now appeared to be safe, at least for the time being, but the situation elsewhere did not improve. There was as yet no concerted Moslem army, and it was a matter of the utmost difficulty to ascertain the position of the various rebel bodies, who could move with disconcerting swiftness and would appear overnight in a district thought to be clear of them. Aerial reconnaissance was made very difficult by the weather, and since the retreating detachments of Sheng's army had brought their portable wireless stations with them, no other course being possible, we were starved of news. Radio contact with China proper depended on the weather, the state of the Tihwa apparatus, and the degree of efficiency at the other end. For days at a time no message could be transmitted and few were received. The beginning of March found us with the food and fuel situation acute, and we were still to all intents and purposes besieged.

On the first day of March there was more fighting. An enemy column reported to be over a thousand strong surprised a party of Government troops at Chi-tao-wan, only a few miles from the city. Outnumbered by at least ten to one, our men were cut to pieces before the help dispatched to them could arrive, but it argued well for the discipline of Sheng's forces that when they came on the scene, though still outnumbered, they easily repulsed the attackers. By nightfall all was quiet again, when a sudden burst of machine-gun fire right in our midst threw the populace into a panic. It was not a new attack, however, nor a *coup d'état*. Some Mongolian soldiers had been celebrating the lull in the war and in a drunken frolic had begun to fire wildly in all directions. Neighbouring units feared a surprise attack, for so confused was the position that any emergency was possible, and they had opened fire in return. No one was killed in this merry outbreak, for there is a providence specially appointed to watch over drunkards; but an inquiry was held to determine where they had got their liquor, since in time of emergency all drink-shops had been closed and a complete prohibition of alcohol had been placed upon the city. The inquiry revealed

the interesting fact that unable to obtain liquor the Mongolians had bought perfumes, and the spirit in which they were dissolved had furnished the alcoholic basis of a variety of potent mixtures. All is well that ends well, and after the tension of the past days we were glad of an excuse to laugh.

Quiet continued, slightly ominous perhaps, but still a blessed relief after a period of continual alarms. On the third of the month the gates were opened, except those to the south and the east, so the population were able to leave the city to buy food at the neighbouring farms. There was, however, very little food to be had. I went with my two friends to take a bath in the public bath-house, but when we got there we found the rooms unheated and the water strictly rationed and little more than lukewarm. Persons of wealth and rank were waiting their turn, and it was necessary to share your bath-tub with a stranger. Good humour triumphed over the ridiculous difficulties of the situation, however, and the needs of cleanliness were met.

There was no coal to be had, and the weather continued very cold. It was suggested to the Government that a search should be made for the vast hoard of fuel said to have been buried by Governor Liu Ching-tang during the revolt of 1866 when he had anticipated a siege of Urumchi. I heard later that limited stocks still existed, and were most opportunely found under an old temple courtyard. We all continued to freeze, and despite the opening of the gates the food shortage continued to be serious. Among the poorer classes three families would share a dead dog between them. Although the assault upon the capital had failed, it now appeared likely that starvation might see the end of us.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WE GATHER OUR DEAD

'Now on the hills of Chinghai
Still all ungathered the white corpses lie,
Old devils crying, "Why am I slain?"
While new devils answer with weeping,
Their voices echoing in the cold grey rain.'

TU FU (Tang Dynasty)

NOW THAT THERE had come a breathing-space we had leisure to count our losses. They were serious, but less than might have been expected from the furious nature of the fighting. The White Russians, who had borne the brunt of the struggle, had suffered surprisingly few casualties, proof that discipline and training count for much. As for the civilian population, those within the walls were safe enough, for the bombardment had at no time been serious; but the unfortunate refugees caught by fire and slaughter outside the gates had perished in large numbers, and their charred and dismembered corpses lay strewn everywhere upon the frozen ground.

For the present the frost was saving us from an epidemic, but spring was advancing and I knew that with the first rise of temperature we might have pestilence to contend with in addition to our other ills. There was grave danger that our water-supply, meagre enough and carefully rationed as it was, might become contaminated. A Red Cross service was urgently needed, and having taken counsel with my colleagues Kung and Pei, I approached members of the Government for permission to undertake the task.

The first need was for systematic burial of the bodies. If that were neglected disease would kill more than war. Our second duty was to distribute food to the starving refugees and to ensure that none of our dwindling supplies should be wasted. Next must come a thorough reorganization of the hospital services in the city, which I had noted were ill-equipped and inefficient. Already in addition to our own wounded we were receiving those from Sheng's forces, and in the crowded sheds which served for shelter many were dying

in abject misery, an ill fate indeed for those who had served us well.

My friends Liu and Yen, of whom I have so frequently made mention, gave me their unstinted support. Having outlined my aims, I was asked how I proposed to set about the work. A relief fund, to which all who were able should contribute, was the first necessity; then there must be an enlistment of voluntary helpers; finally we must have the co-operation of the Government in obtaining and distributing supplies. It was the cardinal principle of our work that help should be given to all who had need, irrespective of race, but we did not adopt the sign of the Red Cross, since this was an unfamiliar symbol in Sinkiang and might be thought by religious fanatics to indicate some conspiracy to advance the influence of Christianity. So we called ourselves the Sinkiang Relief Committee and avoided what, in the midst of a large Moslem population, might have proved an embarrassing association with the Cross.

The Governor approved our work and made a grant of one thousand taels for the preliminary expenses. A member of the Government supplemented this by a gift of five thousand taels of silver from his personal fortune, and after this generous example had been set money poured in upon us in plenty; but far more than by the gifts of the rich I was moved by the spectacle of aged Chinese, themselves not far from poverty, who thrust their small gifts upon us and departed with bowed heads and eyes full of tears, silently brushing aside our request for their names. They remembered the years when Yang had ruled them and how happy and prosperous that season of peace had been. Yet now they had lived to see all brought to ruin. Chaos was come again.

In truth we lived amid a ghastly scene. On the 4th day of March, accompanied by an official of the Police Bureau and several of his men, my colleague Pei and I began our first tour of inspection. At the East Gate survivors were searching the wreckage for traces of their lost ones, or seeking pitifully to gather together what remained of their worldly goods; while at the West Gate, where once I had seen a crowded and picturesque suburb, all was destroyed and the bodies of human beings together with those of goods and cattle lay strewn amid charred wreckage. Slowly I rode through this fearful

desolation, sometimes dismounting to seek for possible survivors amid the ruins. But there were none. In some of the still smouldering houses that I entered whole families lay huddled together in death, having been trapped without hope of flight by the first savage rush of the flames. On the edge of the Red Mountain Pit a thousand dead bodies were collected for burial, putrefying under the pale spring sunshine; and so great is the significance which the people of China attach to proper interment, that survivors were searching amid the corpses for those of their family who might be among the slain. The need, in the interests of the public health, for speedy burial led us to refuse many of these requests. Only for army officers among the dead was delay for the bringing of coffins allowed.

At length, having given these instructions, we climbed the Temple Hill, and searching amid the ruins found many signs of the savage struggle which had raged over this ground. A dozen decapitated bodies over which we stumbled were probably those of rebels executed on the spot, for in warfare such as this there was no question of prisoners. We chose a deep pit and made arrangements for systematic burial to be commenced on the morrow. Then, with the smell of death strong in our nostrils, we turned back towards the city walls.

In the days that followed my journal recorded little save figures of buried dead. We worked long hours in frost and mud, thrusting into the last embrace of earth Moslem and Buddhist, Tungan and Mongol, their savage hatreds now blotted out by death. I found myself wondering as we worked, why had all these human creatures died? Not for a cause, not even in the winning of their desires. They had lived and now were dead. War had slain them. But any more useless conflict could hardly be imagined than that which had devastated half the province. The differences which led to the revolt should have been settled in a few hours of debate between rational persons. No one had benefited from the conflict, yet in a few days the good works of as many years had been brought to destruction. In attacking Tihwa the Moslems had probably slain more of their own faith than of unbelievers, as the mounting totals in my diary showed.

On the 8th of March there was another alarm, bands of rebels having been reported once more within five miles of the

city. This sudden return of fear just when our hopes were reviving produced a serious panic in our midst. Some among the inhabitants cried out that they would kill themselves and their families rather than starve to death in a fuelless and waterless city, and biting winds added to our miseries. I have noted in my journal that our relief workers rescued several would-be suicides from the fate that they intended. Already the first task of burial was nearing completion, however, and we had commenced to organize the distribution of food.

When it was announced that soya beans were to be given free to the needy the first result was a great rush in which women, children, and the aged were trampled underfoot so that some were injured. We therefore took great pains to systematize the distribution, and when it was known that all would be served in turn there were no more rushes, but the starving people lined up with stoic patience to receive each his share.

News came that the district of Fu-kang had fallen into rebel hands, and the last troops to arrive from Dawan Ch'eng reported that they had been forced to abandon large stores of food. The Government now planned to buy supplies from Kuldja, but it was doubtful whether the roads to the north were clear. The main force of the insurgents had moved on from Turfan to the south, and when it was learned that some heavy guns left behind in the Government retreat were still there, some proposed that Sheng should advance once again in that direction to retrieve the artillery and stores. But wiser counsels prevailed and he remained in close touch with the capital. Useful as the food and guns would have been, we had so little accurate knowledge of the enemy movements that to risk depleting our forces and inviting a surprise attack seemed to me the height of folly.

The wireless station functioned spasmodically and brought us fragments of news from the outer world. We learned that the Lytton Mission, having returned from Manchuria, had reported that the actions of Japan in that quarter were aggression in the strictly legal sense of the term; but this belated discovery seemed only particularly amusing. More hopeful was the report from Nanking that fifteen thousand troops which had been opposing the Japanese advance in the north were to be sent to our assistance by way of Russia. They had

retreated in good order, we were told, and would be equipped with heavy artillery, tanks, and aeroplanes. This was the best news we had had for some time, indicating that we were not forgotten. Further, we knew that by means of the Turksib Railway they could be rapidly transported to our assistance. With the exception of Sheng's personal corps, the White Russians, and a few handfuls of the Governor's bodyguards, our forces were ill-armed and worse disciplined. Our only consolation was that the general level of the enemy was even worse.

Our fuel supplies at the Kuo-min-tang building being completely exhausted and the cold still continuing, we allowed our servant to cut down the wooden pillars of the courtyard to burn in the stove. But already between the snow-storms there had been glimpses of spring sun, and before long we were in the throes of the first thaw.

Our burial parties were still working each day, for more bodies were continually discovered as the snows melted. My journal gives the totals for each day, the figures showing that death had been distributed impartially to all creeds and races. Four large kitchens now distributed food with the same impartiality. Dogs made wild by having eaten the flesh of corpses roamed the streets in bands and at night their howls were an abomination. We urged at length that they were to be shot at sight, but they seemed to sense what was intended and their skill in evading destruction was amazing.

It seemed that the coming of spring added to the melancholy of the scene. Destruction blended easily with the cruelty of the winter landscape, but as the skies grew bluer and the air more mild, the desolation of war showed up in all its hideousness. Although the constant work left me little leisure for introspection, I found myself often on the brink of tears. A glance at the clear skies brought promise of peaceful summer, but the sight of a vulturine eagle swooping down upon the last relics of carnage was enough to bring melancholy back into my heart.

Good and evil went side by side among us. Kierkegaard and his post-office workers set a noble example, giving generously of their wages to our fund, and themselves volunteering for arduous tasks; and there were many like them who gave splendid service; but when it was decided that all able-bodied

refugees must be set to work on tasks of military construction, it was noted that the soldiers set over them treated the unfortunate creatures with great harshness and even stole from them, though I should have thought that such wretchedness as theirs would at least have granted exemption from this.

One result of our desperate situation was to bring the heads of the various factions within the city into collaboration, and two of our most generous helpers were Tungan officials, men of considerable education, who in addition to their gifts of money gave what was still more valuable to us, their practical help. My own position was exceptional, since I was not a native of Sinkiang, and as a guest of the Governor was not immediately subject to his orders. The fact that I was not involved in any way in the politics of the city enabled me to meet every one on firm ground and to inspire trust. I even found it rather embarrassing as time went on to be credited in popular rumour with influence far more intensive than I could possibly have possessed. The news that Nanking was sending troops to our aid tended to increase my status, since I was, pending the arrival of a more formally accredited diplomat, held to be an unofficial representative from the coast.

Chin Shu-jen received me on March 16th to hear a report of our work. He looked worn and aged and his features were thinner than when I had last seen him; but he showed no lack of vigour, asked many questions concerning the work of our committee, and told me that from information which had recently come to him the rebel forces were tending to disintegrate and that before long peace would be restored. In that event, he said, he hoped I should be ready to undertake extensive schemes for social reconstruction, to which I readily assented. He also approved my suggestion that the Tungan officials who had helped us should be given membership of our organization. Had I permitted this without consulting him I might have been on dangerous ground, so great were religious hatreds at that time.

The next day the last of the troops from Turfan entered the city, bringing with them a swarm of refugees numbering several thousand, a further strain upon our resources. Medical supplies, never abundant, were now running desperately low, and Kierkegaard told me that he had attempted to get in touch

with the Hami radio-station of Eurasian Airways to ask that medical supplies should be sent by aeroplane immediately. Now that the Government troops had been withdrawn from Hami, however, it seemed unlikely that the aerodrome there could be safely operated, so there was little chance of the relief 'planes getting through, for night flying was hardly possible under the primitive conditions along the route. This news was a great blow to my plans, and also a matter of alarm to me, for already the numbers of wounded were increasing (since fighting was still going on in guerrilla fashion around the city), and some of the recent casualties were obviously suffering from typhus, which we had little chance of fighting effectively in our present state.

News continued scarce from the various fronts. Just when it seemed that the province was quieter a young lieutenant at Sui-lai started a fresh revolt, but though he almost succeeded in capturing the city and set fire to the post office, he was eventually beaten after fierce house-to-house fighting and forced to retreat outside the walls. A report from Chong-chi stated that Sheng had raised the siege and had inflicted great losses upon the retreating insurgents; but though there was much jubilation at this news, I continued to express the opinion that nothing could be achieved by military suppression alone.

Now that there was quiet for some distance around us the postal services were revived, but the official censors scrutinized with care every letter that was dispatched, and came to the conclusion that many of these communications were the work of spies. One of the censors told me that this was no alarmist talk and that he was convinced that there was still systematic espionage in our midst. For instance, a man wrote that he wished to purchase cloth of a certain colour and send it to a town in the neighbourhood. The colour mentioned was that of the badges worn by the city troops, and the letter was thought to be information as to their movements. Efforts to trace the sender failed, which made this view appear still more likely. Another puzzling feature of the post-bag was the presence of several empty envelopes. These were thought to indicate that the city was 'empty'—that is, undefended—which fact was true enough, for Sheng had been drawn farther and farther afield in pursuit of the retreating enemy, and our

defences were not strong. Several letters mentioned that 'the chickens in Tihwa can lay no eggs', which was interpreted as meaning that our aeroplanes had no bombs. Sieges are always prolific of such stories, and had responsible officials not confirmed them I should have been sceptical. It must be admitted, though, that subsequent events amply confirmed the theory that the insurgents were well supplied with information as to the state of affairs in the city.

The thaw, which had begun slowly, was now well under way, and the streets were channels of icy water. Tihwa had for centuries been notorious for its floods, and was spoken of as the town in the desert where camels are drowned in the streets. Though this was an exaggeration I can well believe that many were lost through sticking in the apparently bottomless mud.

The work of our committee had now progressed to a point at which a formal constitution and more effective organization was desirable, so on the 19th of March we called a public meeting in the Kuo-min-tang Party building. Two hundred important personages, representing between them every section of opinion, were formally invited, and beneath a huge Red Cross banner they duly met. It was a difficult task to make the inaugural speech, for I had to please all parties and offend none. I decided that brevity should be my safeguard and spoke as follows:

'To all who are present I and my colleagues give most cordial greetings. Let us admit frankly that there have been differences among us, that we have all failed in this—that we have not any of us given sufficient understanding to the religious opinions of our brothers; but let us agree here and now that such understanding is both needful and possible, for no matter what diverse forms it may take, this surely is plain, that there can be only one truth. In the light of that single truth we are gathered here to-day, officials, merchants, Moslems, Tungans, Kasaks, missionaries, Catholic Fathers, post-office workers, all under one roof, all under one flag, our national flag, the banner of the Chinese Republic. We meet because a common need imposes upon us a common duty, that each and all shall work for the common good.

'Only a month ago we started work, and already we have

received more help than we had dared dream of, help which has come to us from all quarters and in amounts both large and small. Now our subscription lists exceed one hundred thousand taels, but more valuable than the money is the personal service which has been freely given by so many volunteers. Surely all this is proof that in the presence of suffering and danger all men are one. Sun Yat Sen exhorted us to fight for the brilliant future; were he among us now his words, more powerful than mine, would surely plead our cause!'

Then followed reports of the various activities, and the necessary business was transacted. Apart from the fact that much useful work was done, the importance of the meeting lay in the fact that it was the first big assembly of its kind ever held in the province. Christians, Moslems, Buddhists, and men of races as diverse as their creeds, had come together in perfect amity in the cause of charity, and in a region of the world where there is as yet no feminine emancipation, ten women had met with men in public to take an equal share in a social task. (Madame Sheng was one of the founders.)

From this point our activities multiplied. Once provide for human benevolence a sure channel along which it may flow and the volume of the stream will surprise you. Help poured in from every side. A Tartar came to me with his friend, a wealthy Moslem merchant, who promised no less than twenty thousand taels; another merchant who had been selling flour cheaply to the populace placed his stocks at our disposal; while our official status was clearly recognized by a message from the authorities to state that they had just executed sixteen spies outside the walls and would be grateful if we would bury them.

Here I must insert a few grateful words concerning certain Europeans who aided us. There were two Missions in Urumchi—the China Inland Mission (C.I.M.) and the older Catholic foundation. Though they tended to hold apart, each was under the control of a remarkable personality.

Mr. Hunter, of the C.I.M., has spent much of his life in Chinese Turkistan. His name even appeared in the *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Sinkiang* which was printed as early as 1910. He is about seventy-five, or even more, has lived in Turkistan more than forty-five years. In a book entitled *An English*

Lady in Chinese Turkistan, by Lady Macartney, the writer mentions 'young Hunter' during the Chinese Revolution of 1911. At the time, Hunter stayed with her husband, who was British Consul-General in Kashgar. Not only did 'young Hunter' wear Chinese dress all the time but even wore his own hair in a pigtail in the Manchu style, in order to mingle with the Chinese as one of themselves when carrying on his religious work.

Lady Macartney writes thus:

'Mr. Hunter was dressed as a Chinaman, with his own hair in a pigtail, and my husband insisted on his cutting off this appendage and dressing as a European. Otherwise he might be mistaken for a Chinaman and get murdered. He was a big, tall man and none of my husband's things would fit him, so we sent to Mr. Högberg for a suit of his clothes and a hat, as they were of the same build; and we turned Mr. Hunter into what he really was—a splendid Scotchman.'

Yet this fine, handsome man never married, but stayed in the heart of Asia preaching the word of Christ.

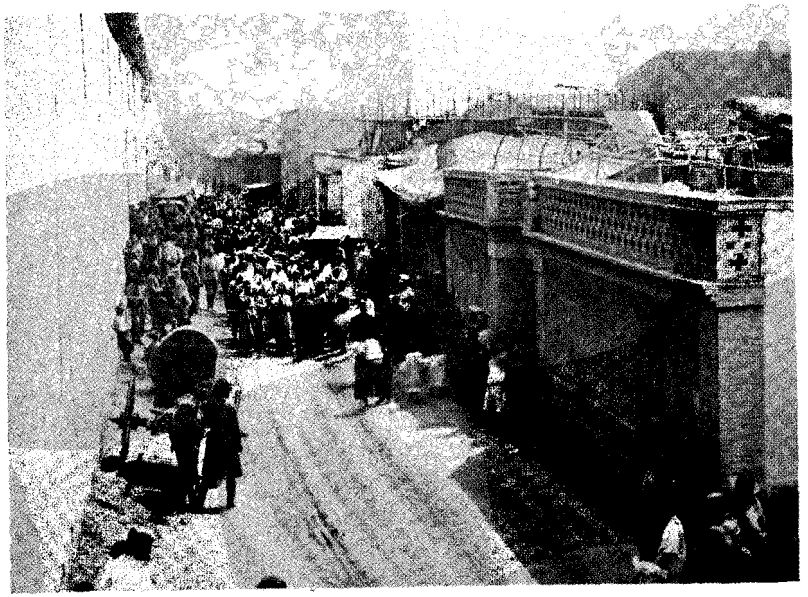
When I came to Urumchi I made friends with the members of the China Inland Mission, of which Hunter was the head. There were Mr. Mather, who had served for more than twenty years, and several new-comers—Dr. Emil Fischbacher, a clever surgeon, and five young enthusiasts, Joyce, Parsons, Holmes, and W. J. Drew, and a young American whose name was Schoerner. Hunter had suffered from an internal disease which needed an operation, but he had remained for years without treatment until the illness proved so serious that he was obliged to take a long trip to Shanghai to be operated on. After the operation his health improved somewhat, and on his return he brought back new young missionaries with him to serve at Urumchi. He bought two Ford cars in order to travel to Tihwa through Inner Mongolia, having failed to obtain a visa from the Soviet authorities. I was told that the trip took about twenty-one days, but according to Hunter this time could have been shortened to fourteen days if only some bridges and some parts of the bad road had been in good repair. I heard that they had encountered some difficulty with the Tihwa Governor on entering the province, and only because

of Hunter's fine record did Chin Shu-jen allow them to come there.

Old Hunter was a member of our Relief Committee. Till now he had devoted practically all his time to religion, and seldom went to the yamen or had any contact with politics. It was therefore a break with past habit when he came to 'Tzu-San-Hui' (relief work) to attend our meetings.

It seemed to me that he was never without his Bible, which he read in Turki and Chinese. Whenever I went over to see him I always found him sitting sternly by a desk before the window with a Chinese or Turkish Bible open before him. Not only does he know the Bible through and through in English but also in several other languages. Probably he knows Chinese Turkistan better than anybody else, and no travel book on that region can be considered complete without a few words concerning him. If I remember correctly, he was rewarded on the recent coronation of King George VI for his long service on behalf of humanity in Central Asia. I have often wondered why he should have left modern civilization to go to such a barbarous and remote place for the rest of his life. Without Christianity no man could have stood such hardship and so lonely a life. He pays no attention to what clothes he puts on or what food he has to take. I still remember his clothes made of Chinese cloth, the style half English, half Chinese. During the siege of the capital he endured great privation from the serious shortage of foodstuffs, but he never complained. Whenever I went to see him he gave me valuable advice. His wide knowledge was always at my service during those critical times. He is very courteous, and when he shakes hands with you he bows his head in slightly slanting Chinese fashion. His voice is gentle and full of kindness. His face looks pale and is seamed by wrinkles, proof of his advanced age.

During the *coup d'état* the Relief Committee had to run the hospital for the Government, and all the missionaries were asked to help with the first aid. One day Mather, who had worked untiringly, came back from the hospital very ill. His temperature was very high, and it was clear that he had contracted typhoid fever from the wounded soldiers who were his patients in the hospital. Three days later Dr. Fischbacher was stricken by the same disease. Both were confined to their beds in the mission. I went over to see them as a



BURIAL OF DR. EMIL FISCHBACHER, SHOWING THE GOVERNMENT BAND IN FRONT OF THE CHINA INLAND MISSION BUILDING

THE NEW GRAVE BESIDE THAT OF MR. PERCY MATHER: MR. HUNTER, WEARING HIS HAT, IS BY BACK WHEEL OF CART

representative of Governor Liu and Sheng Tupan, because they rendered such devoted service to the local Government. I was able to see Dr. Fischbacher and had a few words with him, though I had to stand well away as the disease was so contagious. I could not see Mather, for his condition was too serious, and on May 24th I learned that he had died.

Three days later Dr. Fischbacher also died. The China Inland Mission thus lost two invaluable servants within three days, which was disaster not only for the mission but for the whole community. I was present at both burials. Mr. Hunter conducted the ceremony and we all sang hymns. The Government, realizing the great service rendered by the dead missionaries, gave a piece of land outside the East Gate, where both now lie.

Typhoid fever is a frightful disease. I have had it myself and I know what it means. Had the two missionaries gone sick sooner they might have recovered, but they would not leave their posts. Thus Mather and Fischbacher showed their love of God by serving their fellow men. Their lives meant a great deal.

Later on Hunter tried to build a wall round their place of burial. Unfortunately, at the time, the city was not peaceful and it was very difficult to get workmen, so in the end 'old Hunter' had to do a good deal of the work himself, setting the stones with his own hand.

The Catholic Church in Urumchi has a longer history than the China Inland Mission. In fact there are more Catholics in the capital than any other sect of Christians. Father Hilbrenner had been in Urumchi a good many years and he always appeared in Chinese dress. He had a small hospital attached to the church at the South Gate and he was an active member of our Relief Committee, devoting all his time to the wounded soldiers in the Government hospital. During that time the law college was turned into a temporary hospital, but needless to say it was very inadequate and poorly equipped. Some of the wounded had to lie on the ground. I shall never forget one day when I inspected the hospital and found Hilbrunner there. He was washing his hands and scrubbed his finger-nails so thoroughly that not a bit of nail-black remained. He is a highly trained surgeon and he did everything as if he were in a first-class hospital in Berlin. It was strange to see so

highly skilled a doctor working in such an ill-equipped hospital. He had to carry along his own instruments and apparatus, and he often impressed upon me the shortage of bandages and medicines of which he was in dire need.

Once he asked me to dine with him at the church, and he served me with the best port wine that I have ever had. The Catholic Church usually brews the best port, and with the fine grapes from Turfan at his disposal he was able to make a wine which I am sure is nowhere in the world excelled. But even the wine was a poor recompense for his exile in so remote a place, though I once said in jest that if the Pope could taste it he would come to Tihwa to join him. Recently I hear that Father Hilbrenner has removed to Sui-lai, midway between Tacheng and Urumchi, but it makes no difference to Father Hilbrenner what place he is in.

A typical German with a large beard, he is unruffled by all emergencies. He is one of the few Germans probably left in Sinkiang, for all the staff of the Eurasian Air Lines have long been evacuated. He has a very good knowledge of the state of Chinese affairs and he speaks very good Chinese. I was treated by him during a stubborn illness and was impressed by his kindness and ability. If these words ever reach his eyes, let him be assured of my gratitude. Such men as he are among the great ones of the earth.

Last, but by no means least, there is Mr. Kierkegaard of Danish nationality, Postal Commissioner of Urumchi. I made his acquaintance during relief work, wherein he took an active part. He is a man of some humour, and as he has stayed long in China in the postal service he speaks fluent Chinese, and his manner is very like that of a Chinese official. He made friends among the Ministers, particularly Governor Liu, the then Minister of Education. He was very fond of making jokes, and the Ministers often joked back. I once remember Mr. Chu, Minister of Finance, making a joke about him by saying that he was a Red because he was a citizen of Denmark, which, translated into Chinese, is 'red wheat'. He loved to have guests, and after office hours he always entertained some at home. The French Citröen Expedition and Sven Hedin's party were both entertained by him. His wife, a Norwegian, speaks very good English and is also a very keen entertainer. We worked together on relief work during that most critical

time. I shall never forget our riding together through the suburbs to inspect the different soup kitchens. Once he had a short leave and left Urumchi with his family by 'plane. Many of his friends saw him off from the aerodrome, including myself. After coming back from Europe, I was told he had a hard time with the local authorities. It was very curious that I met him again three years later in Foochow shortly before I went to Soviet Russia. Both he and his wife were surprised to see me again in my native province. He had been transferred to Foochow to take charge of the post office. This only goes to show how very small the world is. We had a long chat about those unforgettable times in Urumchi.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FIRST *COUP D'ÉTAT*

'Heaven sends cloud and wind without warning,
Thus Fate descends upon man—by night, or in bright morning.'

Ancient Chinese Proverb

EACH DAY THE sun climbed higher. There was a smell of spring in the air. The streets were still thick with black mud, but already it was hardening. On the trees along the city wall the first buds had appeared.

After the confusion of the siege we were enjoying both the sunshine and the peace. News came that Sheng had driven off the last of the marauders and was now on his way back to Tihwa. Over the whole province things were quietening down, and the improvement of the food supplies (though there was still some shortage) indicated that the surrounding countryside was returning to peaceful tasks.

The committee we had formed still had work on its hands, but already we were taking things easier. As for the political situation, I had very little concern with it. Life seemed ready to proceed as before.

At two o'clock on the afternoon of April 12th my two colleagues and I, with several of our friends, had been enjoying the sunshine in our walled yard. In the hottest hours there had been more than a touch of sultriness in the air and over the whole city there brooded a delicious calm, that afternoon silence which is made up of small, half-heard, and reassuring sounds. At last I went indoors to meditate alone, taking with me the English version of the Koran which Mr. Hunter had given me, and which I hoped might furnish me with necessary clues as to the mental processes of my Moslem neighbours. The Koran is a puzzling book and I was soon deeply absorbed. I did not, in fact, notice any hint of disturbance till suddenly a burst of rifle-fire shattered the silence of the warm air.

I glanced out of my window. In the courtyard my two friends had risen to their feet and I could see they were

straining their ears. Suddenly came a second volley, nearer than the first. I went and joined them.

'More trouble, I fear,' said Pei. 'Those last shots were inside the city.'

'I think they came from the Governor's yamen,' I said.

'Listen,' said Kung, 'that's a sound of galloping horses.'

Once more we stood silent. The clatter of hoofs ceased. A man who had climbed the roof now came down and reported that the firing had indeed come from the Governor's headquarters, and that he had seen people clambering over the wall there as if in an effort to escape. We were all pale and startled. We had seen so much horror in the past days that it was a sickening thought that it was all about to start in our very midst again.

As we stared at one another a guard rushed in to say that he had seen Russian soldiers, fully armed, running towards the Governor's office. That gave me the hint I needed. I knew that the White Russians, who had borne the brunt of the fighting, had many grievances and I concluded that they had attempted a *coup d'état*, but I had no idea what their ultimate aims would be.

The silence of the afternoon was ended now and many confused sounds were coming from the heart of the city, but even as we debated what to do the firing began again and volley after volley rang out, the sound of rifles now mingled with the deadlier note of machine-gun fire. Whoever had revolted was meeting with resistance; we wondered what the outcome would be.

An aeroplane flew low over our roof, and I guessed that it was the pilot Li who had flown to report on the situation to Sheng, who could not be far away. A good deal, I reflected, would depend on what view he took of the situation. The White Russians did not care much for the Chinese army men, but they liked him as well as any one, for he at least was competent. My thoughts turned to my own position and that of my friends, and while the firing continued I attempted to puzzle it out.

It was not my business to concern myself with internal politics at Tihwa, for my loyalty was towards the Central Government of China, and apart from my duty to the Governor as his guest I had no other ties. What if the Governor were

deposed, as seemed likely? I decided that my duty to him would then be at an end, since it was in his capacity as Governor that I was attached to him and there were no personal ties between us. Any form of government which safeguarded the interests of China had a claim to my support—but there was little object in my taking any action at the moment; events must first shape themselves—then I would decide.

I am inclined to think that my colleagues shared my views, though the firing was too loud to permit much coherent conversation; but just as it was beginning to die down—it must have been about five o'clock—a messenger arrived with a note for me written by Chu the Finance Minister, in his delicate script, which asked me to come to him at once at the Ministry of Defence office.

My servant Chang begged me to stay within doors, and indeed my own preference was strongly for shelter, but my family tradition is that of public service, and I felt that to answer the summons was a matter of duty. I had no illusions concerning the state of law and order in the capital, and I knew that at any moment street fighting might begin again, while as for Chu, he and his colleagues might be all dead and gone before I reached them, so quickly do things happen in these sudden seizures of power. But go I must, though as cautiously as possible; so I thrust the honest Chang gently to one side and started on my way.

It was not yet dusk, but so deserted were the streets that curfew hour might well have passed. From all around came desultory shooting, and once or twice the ping of a bullet sounded unpleasantly near, but though I moved hastily I took advantage of every scrap of cover and kept close to the wall.

It was an uneventful journey, but nerve-racking enough for me. The worst of it was that I had as yet no clear idea of who was fighting whom, and there is no worse feeling than that. To know that any moment a sniper on either side might distrust the look of me as I crept along and put an end to me with a bullet I had done nothing to earn was a far more annoying thought than any feeling of fear which came to me later, when I had chosen my path and knew where it led.

I found two Ministers, Chu and Chen, awaiting my coming with anxiety, and from them I learned something of what had happened in Tihwa during the last few hours. The White

Russians, exasperated by the lack of gratitude shown to them by Chin Shu-jen, and afraid, too, that if a more vigorous and able direction of affairs were not forthcoming, the city would certainly be lost at the next assault, had planned a *coup d'état*. They had swept in through the East Gate and had made straight for the Governor's yamen. There had been about two hundred of them, some on horse and others on foot, and so swift had been their attack that no warning had reached the guard that they were coming. The guards had been outnumbered and had abandoned the outer door without fighting, but at the second gateway there had been a short encounter, following which the attackers had broken into the inner office, only to find the Governor had escaped before their arrival. He had, in fact, hurriedly climbed the wall with others of his staff, and it was these that the watcher on our roof had seen. The Russians had captured his brother, whom they held as hostage.

That in brief was the story of the *coup*. The question now was, what were the moderate elements in the Ministry to do? They had no love for Chin Shu-jen and sympathized a good deal with the Russians; but what if the Russians, unaware of this, had decided on a summary slaughter of all the Government? Then there was the problem of Chin Shu-jen. He was at that moment in hiding, where we did not know, but if he could escape by the West Gate he would find there troops which were favourable to him. They were now engaging the White Russians and there was a good deal of fighting going on in that quarter of the town. The soldiers had little knowledge of what had happened, nor had the common people. . . . For the moment the city was in the hands of the Russians, who had placed guards at every gate. But they were few in number, though they had received reinforcements since the first fighting, and could not possibly hold out against a determined attack if Chin Shu-jen should be able to lead it. What was to be done?

I answered that the first essential was to find out what the White Russians wanted. If their demands were reasonable and they only required guarantees of their own safety it should be possible for moderate opinion to come to terms with them. Otherwise blood would flow to no purpose in the streets of the city, and we should be so weakened that our foes in the hills

would make short work of us. Besides, Sheng was near at hand, and his men would follow him without question. It was further pointed out that Sheng was no lover of Chin Shu-jen. 'Get together as many of the officials as you can,' I said, 'and arrange for some one on the diplomatic staff to approach the White Russians. They don't want bloodshed any more than you do, and they know they are outnumbered and must be defeated in the end if it comes to civil war. They will be only too glad to arrive at an understanding with you. But you must act quickly—before some incident sets the whole city ablaze. Every moment counts at a time like this!'

But it was clear to me that the nerve of Chen and Chu was badly shaken. Coming on top of the trials of the past months this last quandary had shattered them. When several messengers had failed to locate any diplomatic official who might be charged with the embassy to the White Russians Chen wept loudly and bewailed his fate. I considered the matter carefully and pointed out that I had no official status to act for them, so could offer advice but nothing more. I told them to pull themselves together and act along the lines I had suggested. Then I went home and continued to read the Koran.

My colleagues had by this time received partial accounts of the *coup d'état*, which together with my information made a fairly comprehensive picture of what had occurred. What was happening now was less easy to determine. The Russians had left the yamen and were concentrated on the city walls, where they had captured some artillery. Even as I read the shells began to fall, and I realized in dismay that they were directed not outwards but inwards. A cautious glance from the roof confirmed this. The Russians, for what purpose I could not understand, were aiming at the yamen. Did they think that the officials had gathered there and were hostile to them, I wondered? Or was it just lack of judgment on their part and general loss of nerve? It was true enough that they had no nerves when it came to battle, but they were in an awkward position now, uncertain who was against them, and they might well fire at random, seeking to revive their spirits by making a noise. But after a few shells the firing stopped and with darkness an uneasy quiet descended upon Tihwa.

At about nine o'clock there came a knocking at our gate.

A messenger stood outside, accompanied by two Russian soldiers on horseback. With some trepidation we opened the message. It requested the presence of all three of us at a meeting of officials to be held at the military headquarters.

We went on foot through the ill-lit streets, the messenger at our side, the two Russians riding ahead. Several times we were stopped by Russian guards who appeared suddenly from the darkness. We kept up as good a front as we could and strode along with the bearing of important officials rather than of captives, but it was an eerie business, and we had an uncomfortable feeling that we might be held as hostages for the good behaviour of Chin Shu-jen—a factor so uncertain that I disliked very much to think that my life might depend on it! To add to our discomfort the gun-fire began again as we proceeded.

It was a strange scene upon which we entered. Ministers, officials, people's delegates, and Russian officers were seated at a long table. The official seals, including one of those which Kwan had carried with him, lay before them. I wondered if the Governor were still alive.

We were greeted courteously by both Russians and Chinese, and as soon as we had taken our places the meeting began. Papinkout, a Russian officer who was a sort of unofficial spokesman, rose to his feet and made a very good speech, straightforward and unaffected, far more moderate in tone than I had expected. The *coup d'état* had been inevitable, he said, because the corruption and inefficiency of the Governor were imperilling the whole province. The time of the spring sowing was near, and there would be famine if the Government did not take energetic steps to set farming going once more. If there was famine we should all starve to death even if the Moslem forces could be held off. The rising of the White Russians had been for the benefit of every; one and beyond their personal security, which meant the security of us all, they had no claims. They had no personal quarrel with the Governor, who had treated them hospitably enough. (This last was hardly true, but it emphasized the disinterested nature of the revolt, and to that extent I accepted it.) They did not wish to harm Chin Shu-jen, Papinkout continued—their only demand was that he should give way to a more active and effective administration. He spoke briefly and sat down. His speech had

cleared the air and removed many apprehensions, so that business was rapidly conducted. A Political Maintenance Council was at once constituted and Liu Wen Lung was made Acting Governor pending the confirmation of the Nanking Government. A Military Council was also formed on which the Russians were given full representation, under the presidency of Colonel Tseng Yung-chen. The new governor in his first speech laid down three admirable principles of conduct which received unanimous assent. First, that there should be a complete guarantee of life and property to all law-abiding citizens of Sinkiang irrespective of race or creed; second, that there should be no action against Chin Shu-jen and that his life and property should alike be assured him; third, that protection should be given to the Soviet Consulate. I was appointed secretary and required to draft the verbal resolution into due form to receive the signatures of all present. At first I declined the honour, not entirely from modesty, but because I felt that from now on it would be difficult for me to claim that I stood apart from local politics, a position I had hitherto found not only useful but safe. However, I soon saw that my refusal might be interpreted as unreliability so I took up my pen and set to work. As I wrote I heard the guns still booming and wondered what my fate would be if Chin Shu-jen were to lead his victorious forces into the town on the morrow, which seemed not improbable if numbers were made the basis of calculation. Still, I reflected, the Russians were good fighters and they had their own skins at stake. I wrote rapidly and neatly words which, were there any sudden change in the fortunes of battle, would certainly seal my fate.

As I worked I heard in fragments of gossip a further account of the events of the day. At the first news of the revolt the Governor disguised himself by pulling off his uniform and climbed over the wall to seek a hiding-place. It was reported that he was now in the Police Head-quarters.

Liu suggested that we should now send delegates to Chin Shu-jen with a copy of the resolution bearing all our signatures, but in a short while these messengers returned saying that the Governor would not receive them, and had left for an unknown destination. This meant that he would attempt to reverse his overthrow by force of arms, and I saw at once that it was of the utmost importance that Sheng should be found and

told what had happened in Tihwa. He would be hardly likely to side with the ex-Governor, and with him to help us we should be certain of safety; but should he through uncertainty as to the position act against us, or even delay his help till he found out the true state of affairs, we should be hard pressed with the coming of dawn. Everything depended on swiftness of action during the next few hours. Above all we must get a message to Sheng. But how?

We knew that Sheng was encamped somewhere south of the West Gate, and now a Russian soldier entered with the news that he was quite close to the city and that his outposts were at the West Bridge. Chin Shu-jen was somewhere to the north, but where exactly or with what forces no one could tell. It was now close on midnight, and the rattle of the guns showed little sign of diminishing. The Acting Governor looked very grave; the lamplight made faces sallow, emphasizing the apprehensions which weighed upon us all. Li, Minister of Civil Affairs, spoke at last. 'We must send a messenger at once,' he said.

'With what message?' asked one of his colleagues.

'A full explanation of all that has occurred.'

I shook my head.

'That will be too lengthy,' I told them. 'Let us rather send a copy of our resolution with our signatures attached. That will explain everything.'

Voices around me murmured assent. 'A brief message and the resolution . . . that will suffice. . . .'

The documents were prepared.

'Who then will take this letter?' asked Li.

There was silence for a few moments. Then Pei, who was standing close to my chair, said in a clear voice: 'If nobody else is willing, I will go.'

There was a hint of reproof in his voice, for the errand was not his business; but Li accepted at once, before there could be any qualification or withdrawal.

'Very well,' he said, 'you will take the letter and explain the position to the Commander. We could not hope to find a more able messenger.'

Outside the gun-fire continued; there was fear in my heart. In the dreary months of our companionship I had drawn very close to Pei and felt for him far more than a mere liking or

respect. He was a native of Sinkiang and well acquainted with the streets of the city and its environs; he was strong and resourceful, a good horseman, and none could question his courage. But out there in the darkness there was chaos; bullets flew in all directions and there was no clear line to distinguish friend from foe. The ex-Governor's men might bar the way to the West Bridge, and to be detained by them carrying such documents as those I had just penned would mean immediate execution. They were plain confession of treason from the point of view of Chin Shu-jen. I whispered to Pei that his mission was too dangerous and urged him to withdraw.

But the lion-hearted Pei would not listen. He knew the roads outside the West Gate as we used to ride together burying the corpses, and was confident that he could get through. Besides, he had given his word. Strapping his heavy coat around him, he borrowed a small Browning revolver, took the letter and signalled that he was ready to start at once. One Chinese soldier and two Russians were assigned to him for escort. We shook hands warmly, and in a moment the darkness had swallowed them up.

It was now past midnight; the meeting was breaking up. Having completed my duties as secretary, I made ready to go, but Kierkegaard asked me to wait a while as he had arranged for Hussain, one of the leading Moslems in the city, to bring a translator so that the proclamation we had drafted might be put into Turki immediately and displayed in the streets. While this was being done we were astonished to hear shouts and firing somewhere inside the city, which suggested that Russians were encountering resistance near at hand. The Governor immediately gave orders that the disbanded Ministers should be called together at once at the Kuo-min-tang Party office (where I and my friends had quarters), but the guards at the door refused to allow us to leave the building. It was clear that this last outbreak of fighting had filled the White Russians with distrust of the Chinese, for while they replied to our remonstrances that the order to detain us had been given solely with a view of our protection, it could not be denied that we were under virtual arrest. As for myself I was too tired to be anxious. Outside in the dark streets men were killing one another for reasons which I hoped were sufficient

for them but with which I was not in the least concerned. I had no idea who was fighting whom, or why. Placing myself unreservedly in the hands of God, I made myself as comfortable as was possible and awaited sleeplessly the coming of dawn.

The pale light came at last, so I eased my stiffened limbs and gazed at it, on what quite probably would be my last day on earth. Glancing out of the window I saw that there were a long line of carts drawn up outside and that women were loading them with household goods. These women, I saw, were the wives of the Russian soldiers, and I knew then that the *coup d'état* was on the point of failure and that the White Russians who had started it were making ready to clear out while there was still time. The firing was nearer and it seemed to me that our side were no longer replying with any vigour. Sick at heart I faced the new situation. Chin Shu-jen would soon retake the city and then a firing-squad would end my troubles for good. Explanations would hardly be possible, and in any case dignity would not permit me to attempt them.

A party of Russians rode up, booted and saddled for the road. I called out to them, but could not understand their answer; nevertheless it was clear that something had gone badly wrong and that they were in retreat. Kung, who stood beside me, shared my thoughts. 'Our comrade Pei is well out of this,' he said. 'We are caught like rats in a trap, but he knew better! He cleared out in good time.'

I could not but agree that our situation was dangerous in the extreme, and as if to lend emphasis to my words the firing grew louder and now seemed only a few streets away. This was far too continuous to be a skirmish within the city; the forces from outside had obviously gained entrance, and there was fighting from house to house. A small group of us stood there in the walled courtyard awaiting death. There was the newly appointed Governor, Liu; Minister Li; General Pai (one of the Chinese staff officers); Hussain, the Moslem; a magistrate named Tao, and lastly Kung and me. A strong guard barred the gateway. To the rattle of rifle-fire there was now added the roar of big guns, and several shells dropped very near. We all strove to appear as unconcerned as possible, but there was little hope remaining in our hearts.

All at once a Russian officer rushed in and shouted a sharp command. General Pai was immediately seized,

disarmed, and placed under close arrest. No explanation was given to us, which added to our fears. The Governor turned to the magistrate and discussed what might be done. It was suggested that Hussain should get together some of the city merchants and that as soon as the Russians left they should sue for peace with white banners upon the city walls. But when my opinion was asked I could not summon up much enthusiasm for the idea. In the first place, the attackers were in several places well within the walls, and I could see no hope of inducing merchants who had taken no part in the *coup d'état* to expose themselves to danger now in our interests.

Suddenly the guards drew back at the gate and in came Chen Chung, the chief of staff.

'Be of good cheer,' he cried, 'I have seen Sheng! He is on our side. I got through to him at I-pao-chen-kung's and he is moving up as soon as he can.'

We clustered round him, eager for news, and he told us that Chin Shu-jen was directing the fighting at the West Gate and that the Russians would have successfully withstood the attack had not the soldiers under General Pai let in a body of troops under a Colonel Yang, who had started street-fighting and had taken some of the Russians in the rear. Treachery was suspected and thus Pai had been placed under arrest. As for the situation outside the walls, it was still in the balance. Sheng had not yet come up, but the Russians were hoping to be reinforced by some of their compatriots who had been hastily armed, and within the next hour the conflict would be decided.

No sooner had he gone than Gmerkyn, a White Russian, head of the bus service, came to the gate and gave us the good news that the reinforcements had arrived at the crucial moment and that now Chin Shu-jen and his troops were retreating hurriedly towards Red Mountain Pit. The firing had now slackened and was much farther off. At noon Kung and I went out with some of the city merchants, who attempted peace negotiations under a white banner. For my part I paid little attention to these moves as I knew they were bound to fail. What possible basis of peace could be arrived at between Chin Shu-jen and the city which had expelled him? I went straight to my quarters and inquired of my servant if there was any sign of Pei. He had not returned. I made every

possible inquiry, but it was no use, so I decided that Pei must have stayed with Sheng. I was now surrounded by friends and neighbours who inquired anxiously for news. Having told them what I knew of the position, I turned in, too tired to take off my clothes. Fighting had started again, so I knew that the negotiations had failed as I had expected. There was nothing I could do for the present so I slept like a log till daybreak, when I was wakened by the news that Pei had still not returned.

The situation was now becoming clearer. The soldiers under Yang who had entered through treachery had soon been driven out, but the battalion which had admitted them was still fighting fiercely, having been reinforced by Chin Shu-jen. The charge against General Pai was that he had guaranteed the loyalty of his troops to the new régime, but whether this was an error or deliberate deception on his part was not known. By noon, however, the attackers drew off and sent envoys to arrange peace terms. All those who remained in the city whose loyalty was in doubt were now disarmed; Sheng was appointed Commander-in-Chief by our committee; and by the end of the day we knew that the *coup d'état* was over and that peace reigned once more. But I was sick at heart, for news had come from Sheng that our message had not reached him and that he had known nothing of the position till the chief of staff got through. I was now in terrible fear that Pei had perished, and set out to search for him through the battle-scarred environs of the city.

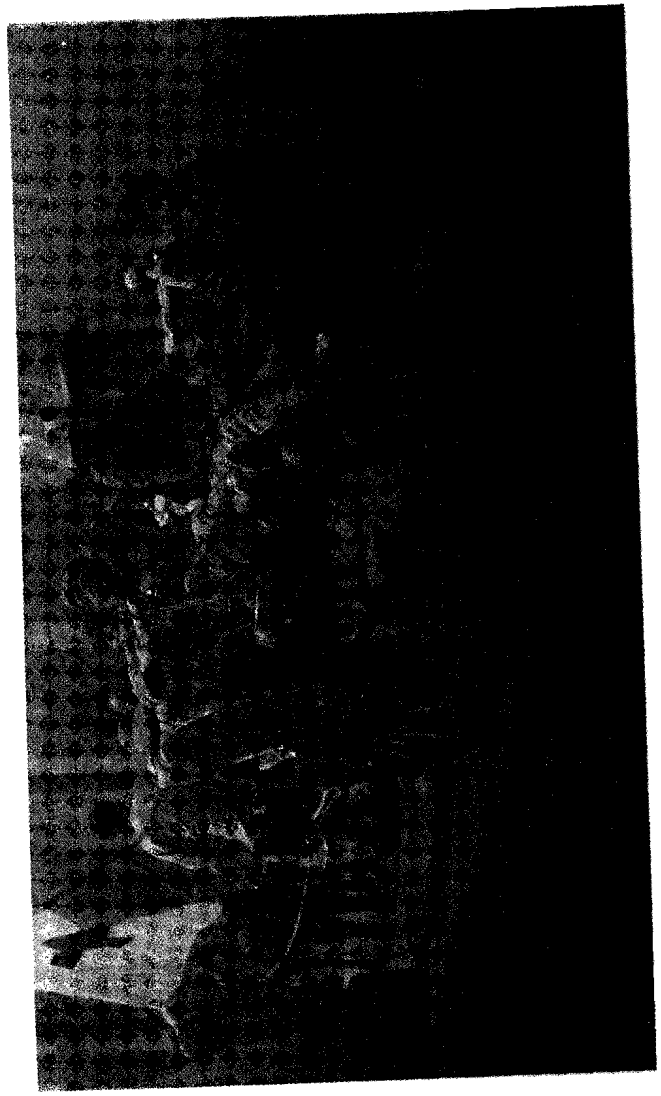
In South Street there had been a sharp encounter, and Kung and I stepped over a pile of ten dead horses which marked where a party of Russians had been taken by surprise. Cross Street was honeycombed with bullet-holes, so we could see that we had not been wrong in estimating that the fighting had been very close at hand. It was here that Colonel Yang's thrust had come so near to success. He had pushed in through the West Gate and forced his way south towards the yamen. Now they were dragging the bodies of the dead out of the street and I saw with sorrow that there would be more work for our committee. A dispirited crowd stood idly reading the proclamation, but the gates of the yamen were closed and an air of dismay hung over every one. Each mind wondered when the next outbreak would start, and there was no incentive

to set trade going once more. In the Temple of the City God a score of wounded soldiers lay untended until our organization arranged for their removal to the military hospital. I made urgent inquiries everywhere, but I could get no news of our missing friend.

The Governor, Sheng, and all the various Ministers and delegates were holding a mass meeting and had chosen the Kuo-min-tang office as the meeting-place. I returned in time to be present when Sheng was confirmed in his new appointment, after which I drew attention to our colleague's continued absence and asked for help in the making of a thorough search. This was readily granted, and word was sent to all the troops that any news of the missing men or any indication of what fate had befallen them should be immediately communicated to head-quarters. Soon word came that it was rumoured among the soldiers that the party had been ambushed near Red Mountain Pit. I hurriedly dispatched a soldier in that direction to see if the news were true, but he came back after some time to say that he could find no trace of any body answering to the description I had given him, but that there were some dismembered corpses at the spot so badly mutilated that no identification would be possible. At the same time a report arrived that Pei had taken the road to Chong-chi, which seemed very likely, so our hopes revived.

It was now the morning of the fifteenth. I went with some friends to the Governor's office, which was littered with broken glass and scarred with many bullet-holes. The arsenal had been broken open and all the weapons were gone, while the residential quarters were looted with great thoroughness. Bloodstains were everywhere, and I learned that eleven Russians and thirteen guards had been killed in the hand-to-hand fighting with which the revolt had started. No official or Minister had suffered any injury; but when a roll-call had been instituted and the dead had been identified it was found that in the counter-attack which followed the *coup d'état* the total Chinese dead on both sides numbered more than three hundred and fifty, while fifty-three White Russians had also been killed.

Our building was now the centre of much discussion as the Government services were rapidly set going again, and I found that as secretary to the meeting which had drawn up



TRANSPORTING WOUNDED SOLDIERS AFTER A *COUP D'ÉTAT*

the first resolution I had gained official status and that my services were in demand. But I could not rid my mind of fears concerning Pei, grim fears that were fast becoming certainties as the hours went by. The message came to me as I sat at work that three bodies had been dug up for examination but that Pei's was not among them. Nearly all of the dead were now accounted for, so I sent for the soldier who had found the mangled remains at Red Mountain Pit and asked him to go back and see if any scraps of clothing were attached to them. An hour later he returned with three pieces of blood-stained fabric. During the time which had passed since his last visit the wild dogs had again visited the scene and now nothing else remained. A very brief examination identified the material as having been worn by our friend, and I found my eyes filling with tears.

Several of his friends set out again in the hope that they might find some fragment of the body for burial, but beyond some splinters of bones and a few shreds of a woollen sweater they discovered nothing more. They found a Government guard, however, who had witnessed the scene from a distance. The party had been ambushed and had fallen to rifle-fire without any fighting. Pei had been killed at the first shot; his gold watch and his clothing had been at once stolen, but on creeping up to the bodies the guard had found a visiting card which had revealed the name and position of the victim.

Later Kung took me aside and informed me that on the day before the *coup d'état* took place he had consulted the oracle, which had given the answer: 'There is one lost among three.' He asked me whether I believed that this had been a warning of what was to occur. For my part I am completely uninformed upon such matters and strive to keep an open mind; but I have noted how in times of apprehension and uncertainty even men of high educational level are apt to seek in some form or other means of seeing ahead. I am told that in recent times there has been an immense increase in such practices among Westerners, which may be attributed to the increasing strain of life, politically and personally, in the West.

Teng, an official, gave an account of his experiences during the tumult. He had taken shelter in the Military Department with no fewer than eleven others. Bullets had rained upon them from all sides, but they had lain quiet and unobserved

till morning, when they had attempted to escape, having at that time no knowledge of what had happened. When they opened the doors they were greeted by a burst of rifle-fire from some nervous Russian guards and several of their number were wounded. The rest had retreated into the building, and when they found they were not pursued had tunnelled their way out at the rear. The Chief Secretary, Kuei, said that he was quietly at work when the shooting started, and on being informed that the Government was attacked he quickly got out a ladder to escape over the wall at the rear. He found his way barred by a second wall, but managed to scale this and to descend on the other side, using his girdle as a rope. It was not long enough, however, and he had been forced to jump, suffering some injury to his legs. An old servant of his family found him at this point and directed him to the Police Headquarters, where the Governor Chin Shu-jen had at first taken refuge. He did not wish to join the Governor, however, as he had no great love for him or wish to be embroiled in his troubles. He therefore reached his own home by a circuitous route and lay quiet till all was over.

Those of us who had done our best to preserve Government authority in what had been a very awkward situation were congratulated by every one, and it was felt that all things considered we had suffered less loss of life in Tihwa than might have been feared. It was generally agreed that the action of the Russians, while reckless and highly dangerous to the city, had at least been caused by genuine anxiety for the public good as well as by their own discontent—and since all had ended without any great disaster, public opinion was inclined to praise their boldness rather than to censure their drastic methods. The only great grief I felt over the whole affair was the loss of our good friend Pei, whose genial, courageous soul we could so ill spare. At our next official meeting I asked that all should stand in silence as a tribute to his memory. Following this I was invited to report concerning the news of his death, and when I had related to the assembly how bravely Pei had acted in offering to take the message on which it seemed that the safety of us all must depend there were few eyes without tears. It was at once agreed by unanimous consent that a memorial meeting should be held in his honour, and as the time arrived we received no fewer than two hundred

memorial scrolls, not counting other gifts and wreaths. I thought of how Pei and I had worked together, how I had admired him for the frankness of his utterances, and had many times admonished him for being too outspoken when more diplomatic methods were required. I, the cautious one, was still living and he, the bold one, was dead. I resolved that I would not forget his example and that if ever the time came for me to risk danger for the public good I should not be found wanting. The best memorials to any man are the better lives of those he has influenced for good.

The memorial service was attended by several thousand people. Kung presided, while Li and the magistrate Chiu read the memorial scroll; to me fell the sad duty of telling once again of my friend's life and death; the new Chief Secretary, Tao, then gave a report on the whole situation, with lists of the dead; and both the new Governor and the new Commander-in-Chief, Sheng, made speeches. Meanwhile an aeroplane circled the city dropping leaflets explaining the news, and I heard its droning roar break the silence as I stood bowed before the shrine where the bloodstained garments of our comrade were displayed.

As a mark of devotion to my departed friend, I composed two elegies for the occasion. Translations of these appear below:

Death all around, but what a death was thine,
A road with no return. What woe is mine!
Cleanse not the tattered robe with blood besprent
Nor seek the warrior's skull. Mourn fleeting Lent,
Eyes red with tears, I them to Heav'n incline.

Peach—blows chilly wind up-tore,
Roses summer rain down-bore,
Wend while locks as raven shine,
Sunset turns the streams to wine,
Bitter tho' the bowl did be
Gallish more the memory.
Friend a while, by night adream,
Oh, to see thy bold face beam.

CHAPTER NINE

OUR WORK OF RECONSTRUCTION

'Think not of the harvest; think only of the plough.'

TSENG KUO-FANG

LATER I MANAGED to piece together the whole story of the *coup d'état*. The scheme had been planned with great secrecy, and only five officers were involved in it. They had assured themselves beforehand that the volunteers from the North-eastern Army would aid them and had determined to stake all on the swiftness and violence of their attack. They had mustered four hundred troops in all. The two hundred actually involved in the attack on the yamen had been divided into two columns, the second of which seized the city gates and warded off any attempts at rescue. The remaining two hundred were held in reserve outside the city walls. There was a good deal of firing during the night, but it was not till the early hours of the morning that the counter-attack was serious, and the arrival of reinforcements, though later than was planned, came in time to turn the scale. At that moment the situation was quite serious, for Sheng was still a long way off (and his intention far from certain), while Colonel Yang had had more than a thousand men in his counter-attacking force. All the northern and western parts of the city had been recaptured, but the North-eastern Volunteers had taken the attackers by surprise. They had brought up some heavy artillery and it was this which had stampeded the troops of Chin Shu-jen. I was also told that in the course of the shelling our place of refuge had been deliberately aimed at until the ex-Governor had intervened in person to prevent it, which must be stated in his favour, though had he known of our resolution, I do not suppose he would have intervened on our behalf.

The position of General Pai was curious. He had been tricked into entering the city by a Russian officer who saw that his battalion were the nearest and most likely to give trouble to the revolt. When trapped into this false position

the officer was asked to give an assurance that his troops would not attack the Russians, but since he was prevented from joining them, it is difficult to see how this pledge, even if given in good faith, could have been implemented. As it was, the troops fought for Chin Shu-jen—which led to Pai's arrest. The unhappy man was executed by firing-squad several months later, together with the ex-Governor's brother. I could do nothing in this matter, but I confess that I never understood what the exact charges against him were, and I fear that an injustice was committed. But events were moving so quickly in Tihwa now that I could hardly keep track of them. The demons of sudden death seemed to hover everywhere in the air.

The Maintenance Committee did its best to inspire confidence by widening its scope as soon as possible to include additional representatives of all the varied races, creeds, and commercial interests in the capital. Delegates representing Moslems, Manchus, Tungans, Kasaks, Mongols, and White Russians were admitted to our deliberations; Sheng was elected to our number to speak for the military point of view; and a shrewd stroke of diplomacy included the deposed Hami prince. It was widely proclaimed that no good citizen had anything to fear from the new régime, and as soon as pacific actions had lent weight to pacific words there was a great quietening of the population, whom siege and civil strife had brought to a state of nervous tension which in itself was a dangerous matter. For it was not enough to proclaim that we meant well. Every one knew that even were this true it was not enough. The state of the capital and of the whole province was desperate; the spectre of famine stalked along our streets. It was imperative that all should be convinced that the new Government was capable of planning and acting boldly to save the city. We therefore issued at once a simple but far-reaching statement of policy in which there was mention not only of theoretic considerations such as religious liberty and freedom of speech, but also of practical measures for the restoration of trade. I pointed out that the promise of free speech does little to reassure those on the verge of starvation.

The pronunciamento was as follows:

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF TIHWA, CAPITAL OF THE PROVINCE OF SINKIANG, CHINA, HEREBY DECLARE

1. That in politics, commerce, and education all races shall have equal rights.
2. That all shall have full religious freedom, with full liberty of assembly, the formation of clubs, publication and speech.
3. That communications will at once be restored and developed.
4. That the mineral resources of the province shall at once be explored.
5. That grants shall be made to peasants.
6. That diplomacy and finance shall be under the supervision of Nanking.

When Sheng was elected to the post of Military Controller it was suggested that it might be a good thing to abolish the traditional title of 'Tupan' and use the new term, very much in vogue with Nanking, of 'Pacification Commissioner'. Whether from respect for old forms or because it was felt that the new title might be held to confer wider powers than it was proposed to grant him, there was heated dissent; but Sheng calmed all fears by accepting the ruling of the meeting that the title should not be changed. He further most emphatically declared that he had no political ambitions. He was, he said, 'only a common soldier', and matters of politics and administration concerned him not at all. His job was to see to defence and the maintenance of order and in all civil matters he would act under the direction of Governor Liu.

Now, during our first meeting in the building of the Provincial Government, we began more detailed organization. Five main departments were set up: Administration, Finance, Diplomacy, Communications, and Propaganda; and a petition was sent to Nanking asking for recognition and also that the numbers of the Provincial Government should be increased to fifteen, so as to include representatives of all races. I was especially concerned that the correct forms of democratic government should be observed and proposed that an Act of Administration should be drafted stating the basis of our government and assigning carefully defined duties to each department of state. Five of us were elected to compile this Act, together with a body of rules and procedure. When we

produced our draft it was unanimously adopted, and to demonstrate their respect for correct government, both the Governor and the Military Controller withdrew all regulations already issued which were in conflict with the new code. At this time I was filled with hope for the future of Sinkiang. I had gone there to re-establish proper administration and events were playing into my hands. I had not sought authority, nor had I intrigued with any party for my personal advancement, but now it seemed that the wars were over and that my duties could begin with every chance of success. Sinkiang, I said, is a blank parchment: we can trace upon it what design we will.

I had seen enough of the resources of the province to know that there need be no poverty if they were properly developed, and I hoped that the population were by now so sick of war that any government which ensured social justice could rely upon the support of every one. Once political stability was assured, I had many plans for education and industry. We could not pass at one stride into the golden age of plenty, but I laid down as the ideal of a well-run state, 'Each does what he can; each takes what he needs,' and was determined to preserve a high level of idealism in all official dealings. There seemed no reason to me why idealism should not be combined with political sagacity.

Li, Minister under the old régime, asked me what he and his colleagues should do. I answered that in conformity with constitutional practice they should tender their resignations, together with the ex-Governor, and wait upon the decision of Nanking. The question at once arose as to whether Chin Shu-jen had resigned, but I held that his absence could be taken as implying resignation. They also consulted me as to the method by which the fifteen members should be elected, and this too was satisfactorily solved. I now prepared a full report of the *coup d'état* and of subsequent happenings, and it was arranged that this should at once be dispatched to Nanking by personal messenger. It was arranged that Chen Chung, the present delegate, should be confirmed in his position and should start immediately. The air service to Tacheng had been restored and Chen caught the first 'plane north, intending to travel by way of Moscow. He was feasted royally prior to his departure, Sheng and Gmerkyn both entertaining

him. Gmerkyn was a White Russian who had a gift for trade. He had amassed a large fortune by deals in furs and had succeeded in practically cornering the sheep-gut market for a Tientsin company. He now found that trade with China was dwindling and had become owner of some excellent plantations in Altai. His house, outside the South Gate, had survived the fighting without great damage and was a very luxurious dwelling by our standards. I was, as usual, impatient of this feasting, for I felt that it was of the greatest importance that a truthful report should reach Nanking ahead of other and less reliable information such as Chin Shu-jen might supply.

From information which was reaching us from various sources I was able to keep track of the late Governor's movements. After withdrawing to Red Mountain Pit he had abandoned all hope of any immediate reversal of his fortunes and had moved still farther west. His wife had fled to Chong-chi in the darkness with only one guard to attend her, and had begged the city watch to open the gate for them. The next morning Chin himself had arrived dressed in the garb of a common soldier, with few to accompany him, and very downcast in spirits. He intended to go to Ili, and gave instructions that the remnant of his forces should make in that direction, but he hesitated, uncertain as to how he would be welcomed. When he reached Manas he found there some five hundred volunteers from the north-east provinces. By this time the White Russian pursuit was pressing him very hard, so, having made lavish promises to the volunteers, he armed them with rifles, forty thousand rounds of ammunition, machine-guns, and one or two pieces of light artillery on condition that they fought for him against his pursuers. Having received the arms, however, the volunteers declared for peace, upon which, seeing that he had been tricked and that further struggle was in vain, Chin Shu-jen set out by motor-car for the northern frontier. Yang went with him. The commanders Li and Chen allowed their troops to be disarmed and were led back to the capital. Thus the fighting was at an end.

Chin Shu-jen's subsequent conduct was typical of the indecision which had afflicted him throughout his period of office. He reached Tacheng and from there sent a telegram announcing his resignation. He then moved on to Bakhti, from where he telegraphed requesting the return of his personal

property (which, it will be recalled, our Government had declared inviolate); but hardly was this request dispatched than in a circular telegram to all civil and military officials in the province the ex-Governor condemned the rebellion of the White Russians, refused to recognize any administration which relied on their support, called upon all to oppose them in the name of China, and ended with the words: 'In the near future, I, Governor and Tupan, will return to crush the rebels.' However, on the fifth day of May the Central Government at Nanking confirmed the resignation of Chin Shu-jen, who soon afterwards took his wife and family back to Tientsin by way of Siberia.

By this time, of course, we had established our administration in Tihwa. The departments had been reduced to three: Reconstruction, Finance, and Diplomacy; a thorough overhaul of the services had been begun to weed out any inefficiency, and when corruption was suspected there was an immediate inventory of the official's property to determine how he had become possessed of it. In the Department of Reconstruction I found myself among able and energetic colleagues, and, having first done our best to re-establish trade in the capital, we sent envoys of good-will to the various districts.

Governor Liu and Sheng Tupan both came to pay us formal visits at the Kuo-min-tang head-quarters, where we worked. 'You have been in control only fifteen days,' I told the Governor, 'and already the whole face of the province is changing. It is my belief that you are the servant of destiny in these matters, for at the moment of crisis you were the one person under whom all would serve.'

We talked of the dark hours we had spent together on the night of the *coup d'état.*

'At first I was afraid,' said the Governor, 'and fear robbed me of strength. But once I had ceased to think of life or death my strength returned to me.'

This was true enough, I reflected, for I had passed through similar phases of experience.

'We have faced great danger together,' said the Governor. 'Let that fact unite us.'

I bowed in respectful acknowledgment of these words.

Sheng Tupan gave me a smiling greeting.

'We have both seen some strange things since we journeyed

westwards,' he said. 'Now the worst is over and for the future I rely upon the co-operation of you all.'

He then assured me personally that his only wish was to serve the State and that we need never fear his intervention in civil matters.

'I want to see Sinkiang prosper,' he said. 'There is a great future here in the west if we work together. I have been in the province some time now and have marched all over it. There are a good many things I can tell you which will be of help.'

He then outlined certain ideas, for which I expressed my gratitude, and we parted on excellent terms.

On the 22nd of April we held a great rally of the population to celebrate the new order of things. The staff of the Soviet Consulate joined us, to indicate their approval of the new era of enlightenment and reform. After meeting in front of the Kuo-min-tang building the crowd marched to the South Gate, where three thousand people gathered, all races mingling in very friendly fashion, waving small banners, handing out leaflets, and shouting slogans. But while I was glad to see such popular enthusiasm I realized that it was not without danger, and taking aside my friends among the officials I warned them that we must be careful to make no rash promises, for if exaggerated hopes were raised and not fulfilled we might have a dangerous revolutionary situation upon our hands. I was a good friend of progress, but I wished it to be gradual and controlled.

We walked on foot with the jubilant crowds till we reached the South Suburb, where the Vice-Consul of the Soviet Union invited us to take refreshment at the consulate. He offered us some excellent cold meats and in the course of conversation mentioned that the latest news from China was that Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang had resigned his post following his failure to defend Jehol. On receiving this disturbing news of the Japanese advance, I realized that isolation in Tihwa and the rush of events that had swept us with its torrent flow had caused me to lose touch not only in fact but in spirit with happenings far away. This was not good for the mind, I reflected, and I determined to press for an immediate strengthening of communications in all directions.

Spring, which had delayed so long, was now upon us. In

the east garden of the Government building, where our committee met to deliberate, the peonies were in bloom, beautiful in their colour, and spreading a slight fragrance. The bright hues shone along every pathway and in the still waters of the ponds, where the delicate pillars of the pavilions were also reflected. The gay plumage of tame parrots flashed in the sun, and sometimes in the warm courtyards a leisurely peacock would spread a dazzling screen of feathers before our eyes.

I had now been appointed to the Communications Committee and worked side by side with the good Kierkegaard, for whom I had come to have a deep affection and respect. We first divided our problems into those requiring immediate solution and those which could be tackled at a later stage. To re-establish efficient radio communications was the first essential; then must come the reorganization of the Eurasian Air Lines; lastly, we could consider improving the postal services and the rebuilding of roads. A series of good motor roads radiating in all directions must be constructed as soon as possible. The first, it was decided, should link us with Kuehwa; but it was only when I wished to consult the map that I realized how great was our task. Even the most primitive surveying still remained to be done, and different maps gave wildly conflicting positions even for important towns.

The water shortage which had been so serious a problem during the siege still continued, and I saw how fortunate it was for Tihwa that the rebels had been driven off in time, for even now, when no enemy cut us off from outside supplies, we could get barely enough for drinking purposes and were forced to close down the public baths. This draining of the wells is a yearly nuisance in Tihwa. It is always some time after the thaw upon the plains that the high snows on which the wells depend begin to melt, so there is an awkward interval when water is very scarce indeed. It seemed ridiculous that after a period of flood there should follow a water shortage, but the fact remained. One day there was a gentle rain and I laughingly called to Kung that the Government must have instituted public shower baths. But though we joked, the situation had a serious aspect, for there were signs of an epidemic in the poorer parts of the town where scarlet fever and typhoid were reported. Our health service did its best to check these outbreaks, which were the aftermath of war, but

poverty and dirt were our chief enemies and we had few resources with which to combat them. Nevertheless, we succeeded in keeping infection at bay.

One member of the Maintenance Committee was a Kasak named Bai Mullah, who though a native of Altai was able to speak fluent Chinese. He had been imprisoned since 1928 for political reasons, and following the flight of Chin Shu-jen we had set him free. He came to our Communications Committee one day and said that he was troubled by the lack of news from Altai, and that he feared trouble might have started there. With him was Ah Po, a Kasak of Ili, graduate of the Russian Law College at Tihwa, and an employee of the Government for many years. Very few Kasaks were so well educated as these two and I listened to their opinions with respect. The Tungans employed in the gold-mines to the north came mostly from Kansu, and it was possible that some intrigue was afoot with forces beyond our borders. At the same time we received information by aeroplane from Tacheng that refugees were pouring into the border city and that there was a serious shortage of food. We deduced from this information that the Kasaks of Sha-wan, north-west of Tihwa, had risen against the peasantry and were robbing and driving them from their fields. There was always a tendency for the nomads to make war on the cultivators, but in the present state of near-famine it was vital that this should be stopped.

We had as yet no news of the delegate Chen Chung, whom we had sent to Nanking by way of Moscow, so I suggested that in view of the unsettled state of affairs it would be better to send a further delegate by another route. I thought that a representative body should be dispatched to lay our case before the Central Government, but days went by and no decision was reached on this vital matter.

At our meeting we had entertained four delegates from the south of Sinkiang sent to us by Ma Chuen-lu to arrange peace terms. They were treated as honourable guests, but we were afraid that the representatives whom we had sent to the south were being detained as hostages. It is an old Chinese device for a general to send persons in ill favour with him as hostages while receiving in exchange persons of distinction from the other side. I had begun to wonder whether this were not now the case. Altogether we had our hands full, and our problems,

which we had set out to deal with in such confidence, did not diminish with the passing of time.

On May Day all the local officials went according to tradition to offer congratulations to the Soviet Consul-General, but this I refused to do, not from any ill will to our powerful neighbours, but to mark the fact that May Day is an international festival of revolution rather than a Russian national holiday. Governor and Tupan had no such scruples and went in military style with a guard around them and machine-gun posts at every street corner. I do not think that there was any need to fear assassination, but after recent events in Tihwa it was only natural that those in power should take precautions. However, the sight of this military array caused a panic among the Tungans and Moslems, who feared that it was the prelude to some new disturbance or possibly the beginning of certain reprisals.

I received an interesting visit a few days later from an elderly official who had once been in charge of the garrison at Ili but had fallen out of favour in the days of Governor Yang and had turned to trade. Chin Shu-jen had continued the surveillance which Yang had placed upon him, but now for the first time, following the *coup d'état*, he was free to move at will. My friends Kwan and Kung were old admirers of his and had spoken very warmly concerning him. My own judgment confirmed theirs, and when I paid a return visit to him I asked many questions and received a good deal of useful news. He had a very shrewd understanding of trade, not only as it concerns individuals but from the wider standpoint of the administrator. To ensure the prosperity of Sinkiang two factors must be adjusted, he said: first, there must be a proper balance between the value of exports and imports; second, there must be a well-regulated currency. Our products were limited to cotton, wool, and some furs, and the Soviet Trading Company was fast securing a monopoly which must result in lower prices as time went on. Our gold production must be increased; for the Chinese trade was dwindling owing to transport difficulties and the insecurity of the interior, while even at its best it had consisted only in sheep-gut export, fine furs, and a little gold. He further complained that our currency was not stable and that its value tended to fall, which favoured some traders and ruined others at the moment, but in the end

must ruin them all. He had been trading in Sinkiang for eleven years, he told me, with very little success, and now in advancing years he would be glad to return to China proper could he afford it. It seemed, however, that he was destined to end his days among the barbarians of the frontier.

He looked to gold production to solve our immediate financial problems, but he was shrewd enough to see that this in itself was not enough. While we talked he gave me some interesting statistics concerning the gold-mines of Altai, which were started, he said, in 1917. For three years there was no tax on production, which prospered, so that in 1921 the annual output was 30,000 ounces; but since then there had been a falling off and most of the gold-washers had had to abandon their work. Last year, he told me, the production had totalled 7,000 ounces, which was an improvement on the lowest figures. In the workings at Ili during the same year they had produced little more than 1,000 ounces; but there had been no competent survey of the region, and it might well be that important sources of gold, both in rock and in river gravels, had still to be tapped.

The pessimism of my old friend weighed somewhat heavily upon my spirits. Things were moving too slowly for me and I had begun to feel that there was secret obstruction. I was still greeted with cordiality and my plans were approved with enthusiasm, but I was tired of merely writing upon paper, and wished to see my visions take shape. I was also aware that there were internal dissensions among the members of the Government, and though I had no share in these the suspicions thus engendered hampered my work. Specially noticeable was the fact that there was a complete absence of ceremonial on Government holidays, indicating a falling off of public spirit. Men went about their duties with closed faces, intent only upon their own interests. I sensed all around me a return to the old conditions of intrigue and fear.

One piece of news came at this time which, though it had that odour of blood of which I was so weary, did suggest hope for settlement in the south of Sinkiang. Ma Chuen-lu (who had detained our representatives and obstructed negotiations) had been murdered, together with two of his officers, by Lieutenant Ma Teh-hsiang, whose envoys, now arrived at Tihwa, reported that the motive for the assassination had been

a desire for peace. Every one in the south was tired of war, they said, and even Ma Shek-ming of Karashar, who had been a notable opponent of the Provincial Government, would be glad to negotiate an honourable treaty. Although by this time I was sceptical concerning any news of peace, this news did encourage me to hope that we might soon have quiet conditions from Hami to Kashgar.

On the day that the Government messenger confirmed this news from the south the White Russians were celebrating some Tsarist festival by holding a military parade. I could not but feel sorry for these exiles, fine men for all their faults, for though it is sad to feel nostalgia for a world from which you are barred, it is sadder still to sigh for a world which exists no more. But though their bravery had saved us they remained an alien element in our midst and their conduct was often a source of alarm. Governor and Tupan had been invited to honour the display, and they in their wisdom had imposed martial law for the period of the festival. This in itself had caused undesirable rumours, and when towards the close of the day two Russians who had drunk too much started to quarrel and shout there was an immediate flight of the population, while shopkeepers hastened to barricade their windows and doors. Things might have been serious, for there was no knowing what devilry the Russians would start, but Sheng Tupan came out from his head-quarters and quelled the tumult with a few sharp and well-chosen words.

The messenger who had described the death of Ma Chuen-lu made his report in agony and tears, presumably because he thought that the dignity of his office demanded such a display, for I could find no reasons for regretting the passing of a persistent disturber of the peace who had loved war for its own sake and could never stay quiet for long. My own eyes were singularly dry when I heard the news, though my distaste for assassination as a method of removing unpopular officials was naturally enough even more pronounced now that I myself held public office. We soon passed to other business, and new magistrates were appointed at Chong-chi, Hu-tu-pi, Sui-lai, and Ngou Min. Gradually organization was extending its hold.

I had by this time spent six months in Sinkiang and had received only two letters from home. To my telegrams there

had come no reply. After the fall of Chen-hsi we had abandoned all hope of reaching the eastern provinces by telegraph, for the wire was certainly cut in several places and the stations were in enemy hands. It was thus a great joy to me when on May 8th I received a telegram from my wife which had been transmitted, as I afterwards found, at exorbitant cost by way of Russia and had reached Sinkiang at Chuguchak (Tacheng), having been ten days on the journey. The following day I received two telegrams from Tientsin which had been sent by way of China and had been three months in coming My wife inquired anxiously after my safety and concerning conditions in Tihwa, so I gathered that news of our *coup d'état* had filtered through to the coast. I discussed with Kierkegaard the appalling confusion of the telegraph service, which made our isolation so irksome. It had never been very good, he said, even at the best of times, for it had always been the custom for the Government to confirm a wire by letter, and it was not infrequently the case that the letter arrived first. Yang, for all his virtues, had not thought external communications of much importance, and though he could have effected great improvement by exerting his authority had never cared to do so. Doubtless he found the delays not inconvenient to certain aspects of his policy.

As for the radio service, its complications deserve a separate chapter, but a brief account will indicate the difficulties which we were facing. There were two long-wave stations in Sinkiang, both of considerable power, installed at Tihwa and Kashgar. Three installations had been ordered from the Marconi Company in 1918, and the transportation and erection of the complex and cumbersome apparatus must rank among the notable engineering feats of that time. The third station was at Urga, in Mongolia, and the whole system was intended to serve as an administrative link between the Central Government and the farthest corners of its dominions. What the cost of the whole affair must have been I can only guess; but even after vast expenditure the apparatus had been allowed to deteriorate from disuse until soon, I was told, it would be entirely beyond repair. The station at Urga was almost completely destroyed by White Russians during the fighting along the Siberian border in 1920, and those at Tihwa and Kashgar had been so badly damaged during the various Mohammedan

outbreaks that it was difficult to say whether neglect or sheer malice was most to blame for their condition; but we had in the capital a short-wave set which though not very reliable, partly owing to unskilful operation and partly because of the screening effect of the mountains, should have been capable of transmitting messages without interruption at least to Chen-hsi, from where they could be passed on to Tai-yuan and thus to Eastern China. But in actual fact we were never certain what happened to our messages when once they had been confided to the celestial ether. Sometimes they seemed to have been cast into the void of the heavens and to have vanished without trace among stellar immensities. Various technical explanations were offered to account for this phenomenon, but for my part I was inclined to credit human negligence rather than obscure physical forces with the disappearance of our dispatches, or, if not negligence, at least cupidity. It was stated to me confidentially that the Government were compelled to pay a subsidy to the Tai-yuan operators, and that if the payment were a little late in arriving a few messages would be left to wander blindly in the stratosphere as a reminder that settlements should be more punctual. But though I served on the Communications Committee I never quite solved this mystery. As for the reception of outside news, we were usually able now to get the news broadcasts from Nanking without much difficulty, and I often went with Kung to the house of some of our friends to listen to what was happening in the rest of China. But I always returned from these visits with a heavy heart. Making use of my political instinct to interpret the news items, I could see that Japanese aggression was increasing to the north, and there was no knowing where it would end. So far off did the place-names of the announcements sound that they hardly seemed to concern us in Tihwa, but as I listened I wondered how long it would be before the whole frontier was a battlefield.

Over large areas of Sinkiang rain never falls. An amazing system of underground channels brings water from land. So high and so long is the great range of the Celestial Mountains that the supply is inexhaustible; thus while the irrigation network is maintained there can be no fear of drought. It is only the deep wells from which good drinking water can be obtained, however, and a great deal of work remains to be

done before the water system of the capital can be assured. The few light rains which came down upon the city during my first spring there seemed little enough to me, but the inhabitants were amazed by them. Later I made exhaustive inquiries concerning the watersheds of the province from which the mountain snows drain into inland lakes and marshes, some of which are at high levels and could be used to bring good water to the countryside in continuous plenty. But for the almost ceaseless turmoil which rent the land during my stay, my reports on these matters could have been far more extensive.

Before May was far advanced the news of trouble at Altai was amply confirmed and Bai Mullah, the Kasak deputy, went north to attempt the appeasement of his people, who had risen in arms under an able leader, Sherif Khan. He went by 'plane to Tacheng, taking with him Chen Yuan-ching, who, despite his great age, was extremely active. Our work in the capital continued, and at this period we appeared to make some progress. The envoys whom we had dispatched to the districts returned with encouraging reports and were sent back with more detailed instructions. It was suggested in Chien-teh that loans should be made to the farmers, and the Government placed the question in my hands. I was glad to organize this very necessary matter, and under promise of repayment at harvest-time, no less than two hundred thousand taels was lent to re-start farming in districts near to the capital. I was also much gladdened by the action of the Government in establishing a fund of five thousand dollars towards a memorial library in memory of my friend Pei Yü-sio.

At length radio communication was possible once more, and I at once drafted a full account of recent happenings which, having been passed by the assembly without deletion, was dispatched to the *Ta Kung Pao* in Tientsin, and thence to all the other newspapers in China. There was still no news of our envoy, whom we assumed to be on the way to Nanking, but an anxious inquiry which came from the Chinese Ambassador in Moscow, Dr. W. W. Yen, at least showed us that we were not forgotten, and we were thankful to be able to send a modestly hopeful reply.

Commander Ma Teh-hsiang now arrived from the south in the full stride of his recent exploits, bringing with him the

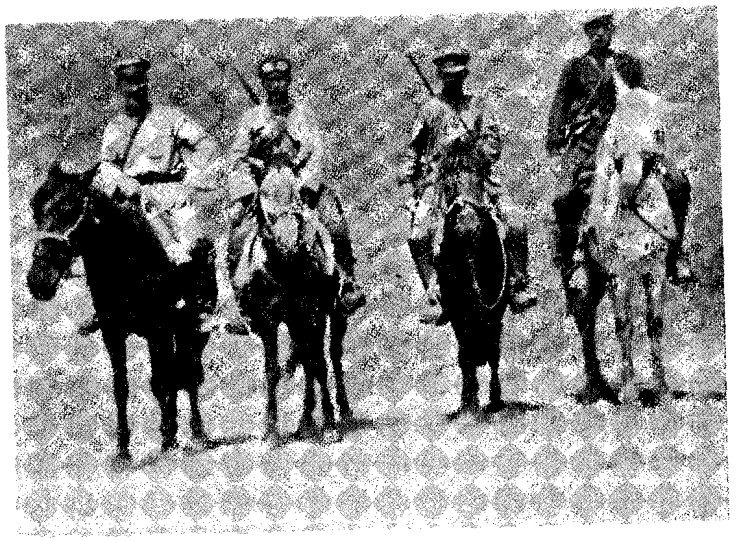
two lieutenants who had assisted in the disposal of the warlike Ma Chuen-lu. We gave him a great reception, and flags fluttered from every building as he rode among the cheering crowds. His appointment as cavalry commander was confirmed, and his followers were stationed in the Chamber of Commerce. I noted that he had several guns of fairly heavy calibre among his armament—which I was told had once formed part of the defences at Nan-shan, the South Mountain. Business and official circles delighted to do honour to the new-comer, a young man of twenty-five whose frankness made a good impression upon me, despite the fact that he was a Tungan from Kansu—the origin of so many of our troubles. Governor and Tupan bade him welcome, and delegates of each community—Chinese, Moslems, Tungans, Mongols, and Kasaks—made speeches in his honour. Invited to say a few words, I did my best to drive home the fact that the ship of state was still far from seaworthy, and that a few more mutinies would wreck us beyond all hope of salvation. On the other hand, I told them, we had at our disposal a vast country only thinly peopled and with natural resources so great that we had as yet no real conception of them. Our future was in our own hands. If we persisted in internecine strife, then poverty and misery would continue; but if we worked together our province was bound to prosper, and then none need covet the possessions of his neighbour as there would be plenty for all. They listened and applauded these self-evident truths; but I wondered how much of what I said fell upon deaf ears. All was well upon the surface, but deep in my heart I was always ill at ease.

Finance was my chief concern. To develop our schemes we needed at least one hundred automobiles, but we had money enough for less than half that number. We had a silver reserve of two hundred thousand taels which I suggested should be handed to the keeping of the Chamber of Commerce as security for loans from the business community. There was little doubt in my mind that the wealthy merchant classes had in their possession considerable amounts of gold, which if they were certain it would be wisely spent, they might be induced to lend to a Government which had given proof of rectitude and stability. But our needs were urgent and the response to our requests was slow. I knew, too, that the slightest hint of compulsion would alienate essential support and mobilize

powerful forces against us. In the end, despite our efforts, we were two thousand ounces of gold short of the total we required, and at length it was decided much to my sorrow that the reserve of silver should be paid over to the Soviets as part payment for the machines we needed.

The next arrivals in the capital were four Moslems from Hami, who came on a peace mission from Hodja Nyas. We welcomed them with feasts and more speeches, and the negotiations appeared to be successfully concluded. The air was full of friendliness and moral sentiments abounded. It was proposed that an anti-opium campaign should be commenced in the province, and resolutions to this effect were passed with due solemnity and handed over to a committee for appropriate action to be taken. While I whole-heartedly approved the proposals, I should have felt more certain of their enforcement had I not known that most of the committee concerned were victims of the drug.

The Governor told me that the trouble in Altai continued, and that the Tao-tai had been compelled to retreat from the district, all the Chinese traders accompanying him; but that it was hoped that the Kasaks who were now in complete possession of the land might support the Provincial Government if their grievances were remedied, to which end he had sent envoys of goodwill to report on the position. Gmerkyn, who had private sources of information, told me that the revolt had been the direct consequence of false reports concerning the state of affairs in Tihwa. The whole district of Cheng-hwa-szu, he told me, had been set ablaze by a party of eight Tungans who early in March had spread the news that the capital had fallen. A mob of one thousand Kasaks had gathered and several attacks had been made on the city of Cheng-hwa, though with such poor discipline that the White Russians had been able to defeat them and for a while to subdue the whole area. On April 18th, however, the Tao-tai had received news from Chin Shu-jen that the Governor had abandoned the capital, which he had interpreted as meaning that the rebels were in control. In a panic he made preparations for a retreat into Russian territory, burning his official buildings and setting all the shops on fire. The Chinese, believing that their lives were in peril, left all their belongings and fled with him; the Kasaks had attacked and slaughtered



GROUP OF WHITE RUSSIAN CAVALRY

those who remained, including the White Russians; and there was now no force left to oppose the rioters. I pointed out to the Committee of Communications how events like these arose entirely from lack of reliable news, for it was clear from Gmerkyn's story that the rising of the Kasaks had been only a brief fury, and that they would submit to the Government as soon as Bai Mullah could reason with them.

My sorrows were much lightened by the sudden arrival among us of my friend Kwan, who had been absent for three months, having gone to Kuldja just before the outbreak of our first troubles. He gave me more details of the flight of Chin Shu-jen, who had been attempting to the last to organize resistance, but had given up all hope when Lu, the genial but level-headed Tao-tai at Tacheng, had indicated that his presence was unwelcome. Lu was the envoy who had first stimulated my desire to visit Sinkiang, and he had now resigned, refusing an appointment at Altai and strongly recommending me for the post. Chin Shu-jen, so Kwan informed me, had been last heard of heading for Vladivostok. He was sure that we had seen the last of him.

News from the north grew more reassuring and from Shan Shan in the south came the report that Commander Ma Teh-hsiang had taken over two hundred rifles and one piece of heavy artillery from surrendering Moslems, which was good news for the time being, though I should have been happier to have had these weapons in our possession rather than in his. To confirm my fears there immediately followed news of more trouble in the far south. The Tao-tai of Kashgar had taken refuge in the British Consulate, and fourteen officials who had fled towards Soviet territory had been turned back at the frontier. Their safety was feared for; and I had visions of Ili being once more encircled, in which case our position in the north would be very precarious.

To depress me still further came the news of the death of my friend Yen, who had served Sinkiang so long and whose schemes for the betterment of the province I have already mentioned. The privations of the siege had undermined his frail constitution, and now, just when his advice was of special value to me, he was gone from my side. Li told me that the Governor wished me to take over the post of Minister for Reconstruction, but I replied that my refusal must not be

interpreted as signifying fear—it was based on the fact that no real effort was being made to secure money for the necessary works, and I had no wish to be a Minister in name only and shoulder responsibility without power.

In the midst of many anxieties, we managed to achieve one good piece of work. Among the force of volunteers from the north-eastern provinces (whose coming had saved the *coup d'état*) were sufficient technicians to undertake the repair of the long-wave station, so that we could now communicate direct with Tientsin. The air service, too, was running fairly smoothly, and we no longer felt that terrible isolation which had preyed upon our spirits for so long; though, I must add, it seemed to me that the natives of the province felt it far less than I did, and that they were strangely unconcerned at what was taking place beyond the deserts; and I, too, was soon compelled to concentrate every ounce of mental energy upon immediate concerns, since once again there came disquieting news from that fountain-head of troubles—Kansu.

CHAPTER TEN

OUR MISSION OF PEACE TO KUCHENG

'The superior person has three essential
Qualities to which I have not attained.
He has benevolence without anxiety,
Wisdom without perplexity,
Courage without fear.'

CONFUCIUS

FOR A WHILE we basked in the sunshine. It was as though the city licked its wounds. The mountain masses either flashed like diamonds in the sun or frowned darkly where no sun fell. The air trembled above the house-tops and the tips of green leaves were like spears.

But I was anxious despite the calm. For me the clear light vibrated with rumour and I could not gaze at the great hills without thoughts of what might be happening beyond them.

Our armament, never adequate, had been wasted in civil strife. Sheng Tupan worked night and day to restore our defences and to organize what power we possessed, but he was forced to rely upon hasty improvisation, and those of us who knew the true weakness of our resources, material and financial, were well aware that should Ma Chung-yin choose to make an immediate attack things might go hard for our city.

News from the neighbouring districts continued to be reassuring. In the east the common people are quick to sense whether a government is strong and determined or whether there is no firm hand in control. We had sent envoys in all directions to proclaim our virtues, but it is probable that it was the gossip passed from trader to trader which established our credit in the outlying villages. Far more powerful than Government proclamations to mould public opinion are the few words exchanged by merchants as they haggle over a deal in grain.

In this manner it had become known that Sheng was a good soldier and that he was determined to fight to the last. The fact that he had won his way to power through personal conflict was in his favour. Though less terrible than 'Big Horse', he

too had in his demeanour the makings of a legend. As the time went by it appeared that his name was winning submission in the whole of the north.

Yet while I was encouraged by such news as this, I knew that at any moment we might learn of Ma Chung-yin's advance and that he might well undo in a few weeks of slaughter all the good we had accomplished in the face of odds. But no tidings came from the eastward. Whatever the mountain crests might be able to see, they hid their secret from us; and the great plains beyond them were still. The aeroplane reconnaissance reported no massing of troops; the wireless was intermittent and non-committal; the telegraph was for the most part dead.

We did not know it at the time, but 'Big Horse' was as ill-informed concerning us as we were of him; but there was this difference in our states of mind, that he was convinced of our weakness, while we inclined (as was afterwards shown) to over-estimate his power. No news had reached him of the *coup d'état*, which had occurred while he was on the march; and since he had always been contemptuous of Chin Shu-jen, he fancied that the capital of Sinkiang must fall an easy prey to his ruthless advance. The Moslem leader Hodja Nyas of Hami (who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and thus enjoyed great prestige) had sent word to Ma Chung-yin by the mouth of Yollbars Khan that all was ripe for conquest. The 'young commander' did not know that since then all was changed.

The 36th Division had been reorganized and several fortunate seizures of arms had brought their equipment far above the average of such provincial forces when Ma set out for Sinkiang. He did not hasten, for he was convinced that the province was his for the taking, and he wished his men to be fresh for battle. In spite of his slow approach, however, our news was so scanty at this time that not till May 17th, when an urgent telegram from General Li Hai-jo informed us that fighting had broken out at Kucheng, did we realize that the final struggle was begun.

It was at Mu-lei-ho, a few miles to the east of Kucheng, that the first clash occurred. General Li had already observed the arrival of a large body of troops at Hami, but his message announcing this came to hand at Tihwa at the same moment

as a later dispatch reporting that fighting had started along the bank of the river. Thus we had little warning, and it was well that Sheng was prepared.

Later messages added to our knowledge of the situation. Holding back the main body of his troops, 'Big Horse' had sent an advance guard under the leadership of his brother Ma Chung-chieh to test what opposition lay ahead. Arriving at Hami with about two thousand five hundred men, Ma's brother had taken possession of the town after bilingual proclamations in Chinese and Turki had informed the inhabitants that they were soon to be freed for ever from the hated Governor Chin.

The townsfolk had returned the thanks customary on such occasions in China, though it is doubtful whether many of them cared much for a 'liberation' which involved supporting an invading army of rapacious character; but any dissentients were wisely silent, provisions were supplied to the troops, and thus refreshed, a party of them sallied forth to battle. It was a brief encounter which did them little honour, for meeting with determined resistance where none was expected they beat an immediate retreat.

In the capital there was intense activity. Sheng's crack troops were mustered; volunteers, hastily assembled, swelled their ranks; preparations were made for an immediate start. Distressing rumours filled the air when these signs of war were observed by the populace, and the Chamber of Commerce asked me to obtain a definite statement from Sheng Tupan so that public fears might be allayed.

The commander received me cordially and gave me what news had come to hand. It was essential, he said, to make immediate resistance; the nearer Ma Chung-yin came to the capital the greater his influence with the Moslems would become. If he could be halted early in his march it would do him far more harm than the mere military check; furthermore, he would not be expecting desperate resistance at so early a stage and might well be taken by surprise.

I asked Sheng where he intended to make his head-quarters, and he answered that he did not intend himself to go as far as Kucheng, but would stay at San-tai, half-way between that town and the capital. From there communication would be swift in either direction, and were Ma to attempt any

outflanking movement he would be able to get back in time to meet it. Such a move was highly improbable, however, in view of the difficult country to the south.

I placed before him the view of the Chamber of Commerce (which I did not wholly share) that his absence from the city would be dangerous. His reply was that the volunteer troops would be left behind to deal with any disorder and that for his part he thought the citizens were so sick of warfare that there was little fear of any revolt within our walls. Nevertheless he promised that every possible precaution should be taken, and that he would hold himself ready to return at a moment's notice should trouble arise. While the safety of the capital was vital, he told me, he had no wish to be besieged once again. He was convinced that a bold stroke might prevent that and was determined to take action.

His arguments convinced me, and were in any case much reinforced by the news that following their reverse at Mu-lei-ho the troops of Ma Chung-chieh had eventually advanced in such numbers that it had been prudent to abandon that position. There were now, the dispatch informed us, at least four thousand enemy troops in the field.

On May 26th Sheng left for the front. His troops, which did credit to his tireless endeavours, consisted of rather less than five thousand men, of whom more than a thousand were White Russians. They would, however, be reinforced by several small garrisons along their route of march.

It was with a heavy heart that I watched them go. To think that after so brief a pause more war was upon us distressed me deeply; but I felt that until Ma Chung-yin was finally defeated we should never be able to rest.

Although we had no hopes of help from that quarter we had, as a matter of correct procedure, informed Nanking of our situation, protesting against the conduct of their divisional commander, Ma Chung-yin. Now came a message from our representative there to say that our protest was recognized, and that orders had been sent to the offending commander to cease advancing. . . . I could not restrain rather sad laughter as I wondered whether 'Big Horse' would in fact receive that message (he used methods similar to Nelson's when orders were unwelcome), and just how much attention he would pay to it if it were not possible for him to deny receipt. But the dispatch

added that General Hu Chung-nan had been ordered to enforce obedience to the dictates of Nanking, so it was at least clear that our position was recognized, and that though distance might prevent aid from arriving in time, we had the active goodwill of our superiors.

This encouraged me, for there is a legal side to my mind which appreciates correctitude. If I were to be slain I wished it all to be done in orderly fashion, the rights and wrongs of the matter plainly established.

General Tseng Yung-chen was placed in command of Tihwa on Sheng's departure, and did his best to maintain our morale despite rumours that Kucheng had fallen and that 'Big Horse' was advancing with inconceivable rapidity to beat upon our walls.

From what I knew of Kucheng I did not think that Sheng could defend the town, and I felt that only in the mountain passes was there any chance of checking our foes. I was thus only confirmed in my fears when Sheng Tupan suddenly returned on the night of June 1st, the greater part of his troops following him. Kucheng had fallen; there was a general retreat at every point of the narrow front; it seemed in the darkness of that night, with the noise of marching men resounding in the black streets, that our fate was sealed.

The next morning, early, I received a message from Sheng: 'Request that you will come to Government Building immediately for important and urgent business.'

When I got there Tao, the Secretary-General; Lu, editor of the *Tien Shan Journal*; Li, the aviator; and Kwan, my friend, were already there. Sheng entered, looking very grave, and coming at once to the purpose of our meeting, read out a telegram which he had received from Ma Chung-yin. I was very surprised that he should be in communication with our attacker, and the contents of the message surprised me still more. It expressed a willingness to receive peace delegates to discuss 'our differences'. Either this was sheer cunning, or it was very unlike what I knew of Ma.

Sheng gave it as his opinion that the disapproval of the Central Government had possibly taken effect and that Ma Chung-yin was uneasy as to the future were he to flout their commands. It was also unlikely that news of the changed state of affairs at Tihwa and our improved defences had by

now come to his ears. He realized that there was no easy task ahead of him, and wished for a sharing of territories rather than a war which might mean his ruin.

To all this I listened sceptically. My own view was that Ma needed time for some manœuvre of which we were unaware, and that this was merely a device to get it. On the other hand, no one had greater hatred of war than I, and in my heart I felt that no chance of peace, however slight, must be disregarded.

There was a brief discussion, and then Sheng came to the point. He had decided to negotiate. Who were to be the delegates? He now called upon me, he said, together with Lu because we appeared to him most suitable.

I replied at once that I was a new-comer to Sinkiang and knew far too little of the complicated politics of the province to be a useful envoy. Lu, who spoke after me, also expressed great reluctance. Ma was a fanatical Moslem and his hatred of the Chinese was intense. Further, he was utterly without conscience, and no flag of truce would protect any messenger who angered him. There were many known instances of prisoners slain in cold blood by Ma and his lieutenants, and it was certain that the motive of the present advance upon Sinkiang was revenge for previous reverses. Why then, asked Lu, should Ma be genuine in his wish to negotiate . . .? 'Peace is not in him,' said Lu, and for my part I was in complete agreement.

Sheng insisted, however, that a 'deal' was possible. With a huge territory to divide, it seemed ridiculous for two rival commanders to destroy each other, bringing misery to all the province. Ma Chung-yin was no fool, and he was far less powerful than we imagined. In his rear a hostile Government was preparing to inflict chastisement on the most erring of her sons, and if anything went wrong there would be nowhere for him to retreat. Besides, time was not on the side of Ma, much as that might appear. We too had need of a breathing-space. Within six months Tihwa could be made impregnable; besides, once the harvest were gathered we should be on stronger ground. Ma could only gather what he could seize; given a period of peace we should be amply supplied by normal marketing from all round.

In short, he, Sheng, had decided to attempt discussion. All that remained was to choose the messenger. He must be a

man of learning, for even Ma would respect a scholar; he must be fearless, for he would have to go unprotected to 'Big Horse's' camp; and he must be subtle—for on his ability to inspire fear, without the outward appearance of threatening, the safety of Tihwa might depend.

For a long while we talked things over, but reaching no conclusion decided to consult the All Races Association, who might perhaps be able to elect suitable emissaries to Ma Chung-yin.

On June 3rd a message came which puzzled me. It said that Chen Chung, our special envoy to Nanking, would soon be back. As he had left by the land route only a few weeks previously I could not understand how he could be back so quickly; but when I met him at the airport he told me that he had been to Moscow—having sent his report to Nanking by mail.

I was too well trained in tact to ask him by whose order he had altered his movements—it was certainly not on our Council's instructions that he had done so. Something, it was clear, was happening behind the scenes.

The next day, as I sat reading the maxims of Confucius in the sunny courtyard of my dwelling, I was disturbed by a murmur of voices in the street. Rising, I was confronted by a delegation in which Tungans, Moslems, and Manchus were all represented. So great was Ma's hatred of our race that no Chinese could be found willing to face him.

An old friend of mine stood out from the group. Hussain was a Moslem merchant said to be of fabulous wealth. So highly was he esteemed of all men that his word was sufficient to bind any bargain. He spoke to me now not as a delegate but as a friend.

'It is your duty,' he said, 'to go.'

I protested that I had no official status whatever.

'My friend,' he said, 'our highest duties are appointed by God.'

I knew that he was right. There came to my mind the memory of Pei, who had been my friend, and who had accepted without question the duty which had led him to his death. I felt ashamed that I had so long sought to evade this dangerous task.

'Very well,' I said, 'I will go.'

'I will go with you,' said Hussain. 'Never will I leave your side, and my life shall be a pledge for your safety.'

I knew that I could trust his word.

My decision having been given, we went in a body to the Governor's yamen where we were received by Liu and Sheng.

Sheng spoke after the customary salutations.

'Our situation is desperate,' he said. 'Ma Chung-yin has occupied Kucheng and already may have advanced farther. Our defences are incomplete; and, in any event, renewal of civil war means common ruin. While we sincerely desire peace, if that cannot be, at least we must negotiate to win time. Ma is cunning; but we may even yet outwit him.'

I pleaded my inexperience. I had not yet been a year in Sinkiang.

'That fact,' said the Governor, 'you will find a great advantage. You have done nothing to make Ma hate you.'

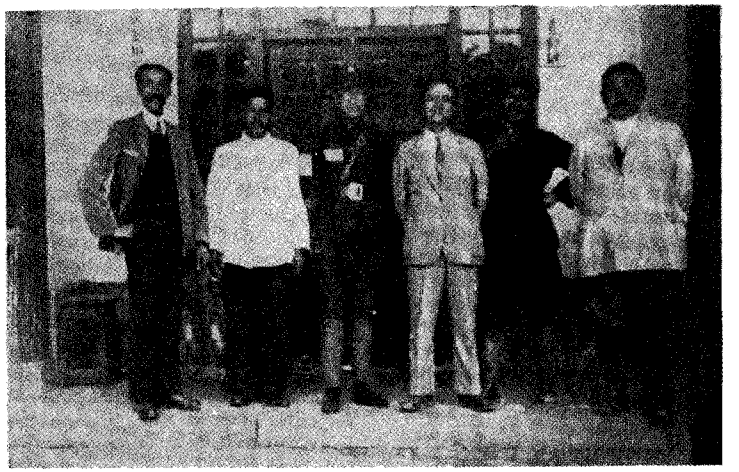
I said that I was not of sufficiently high rank to speak to Ma as an equal. Surely the Governor himself should go . . .?

'Willingly I would do so,' he answered, "but I am too old to make the journey. Besides, if matters of rank are in question, you are a scholar; and a scholar is of the highest rank of all.'

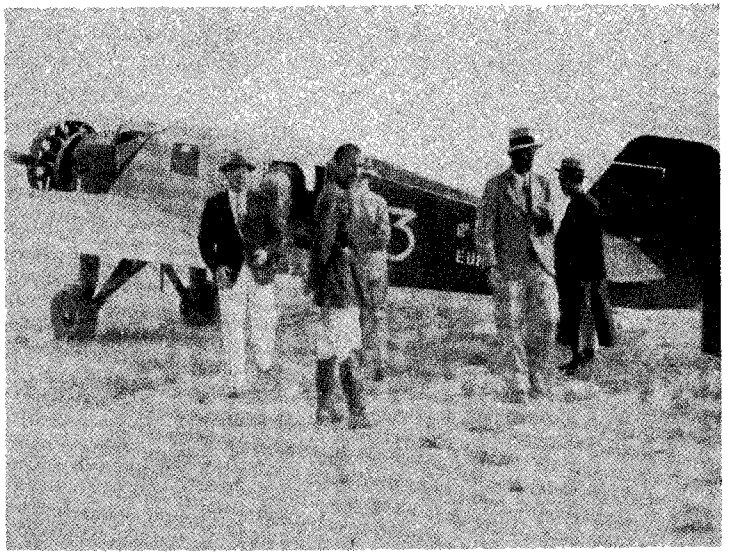
'All is decided, then,' I said. 'But forgive me if I make certain conditions. First, that I go not as an official, but as representing the common people—the peasants, shopkeepers, and merchants whom war will ruin. Second, that during the time of my mission no troops shall be moved. I intend to strive for true peace, and there must be no dishonest manœuvres. Thirdly, I must take no complicated treaty, but simply conditions, to which, if I can bring Ma to accept them, the Government will strictly adhere.'

There was general consent, and we left to make preparation for the journey.

My next hour was a bad one. I knew that this was no ordinary diplomacy on which I was engaged. In his sudden rages Ma Chung-yin was scarcely human: torture, murder, and massacre were the commonplaces of his existence. Even Hussain, old and rich and respected, also of the same faith, had hesitated



KUCHENG PEACE MISSION:
LEFT TO RIGHT, CHAO, HUSSAIN, YANG (REPRESENTATIVE OF MA CHUNG-YIN), AUTHOR, TUNG PAO AND MUNSUR



THE URUMCHI POSTAL COMMISSIONER, MR. KIERKEGAARD, LEAVING FOR EUROPE BY A EURASIAN AIR LINES PLANE

long before offering to place himself in the power of the dreaded 'Big Horse'. . . .

A message came to me later in the day that the Governor again wished to see me.

'I feel towards you now as to a younger brother,' he said. 'Do not think that I doubt your abilities; but since an old man's wisdom may be of service to you, let us now talk over things together.'

He stroked his beard.

'Ma has much strength, but he has many weaknesses. He is dreaming of conquering half the world, but past defeats must have taught him sharp lessons. Doubtless he is a prey to secret fears. . . .

'Then he is vain. His vanity is so great that it demands tremendous conquests. That is because he is profoundly ignorant, and knows no other road to distinction. Show him that peace can bring fame no less than war. Suggest that he is more than a warrior—a scholar, a statesman. Then perhaps he will be glad to find that egotism may be appeased without the risks and inconvenience of slaughter.

'You never know with such men. When you meet him you must judge for yourself how much value there is in my ideas.

'Now, as to what we can offer. . . . Our province is large. Tell him that we in the north are utterly impoverished and that it is southwards that the rich lands lie.

'Then there is the question of religion. Tell him that he can never hope to rule save as a great prince of the True Faith. In the south there are countless Moslems who look to him as their saviour. It is there that his destiny lies.'

Once more Liu stroked his beard. For my part, I was much impressed by the shrewdness with which he had spoken. I forgot the dangers of my journey in the fascination of thinking that I should soon be matching my wits against a strong and ruthless soldier, pitting subtle knowledge of human weaknesses against the cruder threats of physical power.

As Liu spoke I had felt like a chess-player with the human brain as my board and thoughts for pieces. Briefly I thanked him, promising to bear in mind what he had told me. Only when higher considerations were agreed upon did we turn to discussing the details of the journey.

The next morning I had my final interview with Sheng Tupan before starting. I impressed upon him the great importance of holding back his outposts during the time of negotiation. Nothing would be worse for me than for fighting to break out owing to some chance collision. A single shot from a sentry in a state of drunken bravado or scared sobriety might undo in an instant hours of patient negotiating.

Sheng promised me that he would do all in his power to restrain his troops, but said that the White Russians were apt to be difficult to handle. They knew that Ma Chung-yin hated them above all others of his enemies, and they did not believe that anything could be gained by talking. At the slightest sign of advance from the other side they would be straining at the leash. Life had dealt hardly with these exiles. Apart from drinking, the only pleasure life had left them was the joy of battle.

At two o'clock in the afternoon our lorry was ready and our party assembled. An envoy of Hodja Nyas was to return with us, and on our way we were to welcome emissaries whom Ma was sending to Tihwa, and who had already arrived at Fu-yuan. We were five in all: myself, two Moslems, a Tungan, and a Manchu. It was agreed that the actual negotiations were to be in my hands.

On our white banner of truce were inscribed the words: 'Peoples' Delegates', and we had various letters and manifestoes in our possession all signifying the unanimous wish for peace of the inhabitants of Tihwa.

By nightfall we had travelled eighty miles. At a small village, Tze-li-chuan, in the flat, cleverly cultivated plains, we were received at the inn, which was the private house of a Moslem friend of Hussain, and only an inn to this extent, that it was the recognized centre of hospitality in the community.

We were well entertained and feasted on bread, mutton, and rice cakes. Prayers were said for our success and safety, and though they were of an alien faith, I found them comforting. Then I retired for the night, my bed the earthen kang, on which I spread the bedding I had carried with me.

Darkness had descended upon the plains. There was no sound to be heard. I lay awake, thinking.

All at once I was aware of the sound of hoofs, very faint at first in the level distance, but soon much nearer. Although

there was no reason why I should think so, I knew that this messenger in the night concerned me. I felt, too, that he travelled with too great an urgency to be the bearer of good tidings.

My resting-place was near the window. I heard the rider in the darkness thunder up to our shelter and dismount at the door. Then came the sound of voices, speaking quietly, but in earnest discussion.

After some time Hussain stood beside me, a lamp in his hand.

'Mr. Wu,' he said, 'I have bad news for you. Our mission is hopeless; we must return.'

Then he told me that a friend of his (his business had ramifications everywhere, and all with whom he traded were his friends) had sent word in great haste that there was trouble in Kucheng. Some scores of Russian and Mongol prisoners had been massacred in cold blood. 'Big Horse' was in a vile humour now that the unexpected strength of the capital seemed likely to delay his plans. He had also received word that the Central Government were preparing to take action against him. His rage was terrible to see; were we to venture into his power, our lives would hang by a thread of singular fineness. His friend, said Hussain, begged him to return.

Chao, the Tungan of our company, showed the simple strength of his race.

'What explanation shall we give,' he said, 'if we abandon our task? We hear now that there is danger; well, we knew that before we started! How should I face my people if I went back shamefacedly from an honourable mission? I will not spend the rest of my life pointed out as a man who was afraid.'

I could not help reflecting that as a Tungan of the same breed as Ma he had nothing to be afraid of.

However, despite this eloquence Hussain begged me to be guided by his advice. He said that it was heavily upon his conscience that he had induced me to undertake this embassy by promises which now he found should never have been spoken. If I returned he would say that it was by his advice, and his word would be sufficient to protect my good name.

I did not wish to throw away my life to no purpose; yet neither did I wish to admit failure until facts compelled the admission.

'Let us proceed to Fu-yuan,' I said, 'and speak with

Ma's delegates there. That much at least we will do before returning.'

There was general agreement, and at dawn we were again on the road. It was at eight o'clock that we reached San-tai, some thirty miles farther from safety. Here we breakfasted, and then went out to meet Hodja Nyas, his commander Mahmud, and their Ahuns, who had come to greet us from across the hills.

I sensed at once the difficulties of their position. Having invited Ma Chung-yin to 'liberate' them in the days when Tihwa was under Chin Shu-jen, they found, now he had taken them at their word, that the capital was no longer an easy prize, and that in the large-scale conflict which was brewing they were well in the line of fire. They told us that they were willing to support the new administration at Tihwa, but justified their lukewarmness in supporting us hitherto by doubts and suspicions raised in their minds by the conduct of one Ma Teh-hsiang, a lieutenant loyal to Sheng Tupan, who had disarmed the Moslems in his troops even though they had sworn allegiance.

This action seemed singularly wise to me, but I was forced to admit that it created diplomatic difficulties. To explain it away without mention of the true explanation—that evidence of their intrigue with Ma Chung-yin was in our possession—taxed my ingenuity; but at last I succeeded in convincing them that though certain precautions had been necessary, Sheng was only too ready to let bygones be bygones.

We lunched together amicably; then the lorry set out once more for Fu-yuan, and the Hodja Nyas company retired once more to the hills.

On the whole he had made a favourable impression upon me. His face was round and kindly, his manners and speech simple as those of a peasant. His reputation was founded on a pilgrimage to Mecca—which gave the title of 'Hadji', much esteemed among his countrymen.

A two-hour stretch, during which we covered only twenty miles, brought us to Fu-yuan, where forced labourers were digging trenches on the outskirts of the town. Here we were threatened by sentries with raised rifles, but after a brief parley the magistrate and the head of the garrison came out to see us.

We inquired of them concerning the delegates from Ma Chung-yin, but they could tell us nothing. Either they had gone by another route or they had not yet started. It occurred to me that perhaps there was no intention that they should be sent, in which case we should be valuable hostages, with no corresponding hostages in the hands of Sheng. It was all very disquieting, especially in view of the news of the previous night.

A telephone call from Ma's chief of staff informed the magistrate that we were expected and should be given every assistance, adding that the matter was urgent and that we should proceed without delay.

Now came the moment for a final decision.

There was still a chance to turn back, though it was possible that an attempt might be made to prevent us. If we went on, we were entering the tiger's lair.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

I SEE 'BIG HORSE'

'Be not so bold
Or ill foretold.'
SZE KING (Book of Odes)

SAN-TAI IS A typical grey-walled Chinese city—twisting streets and flimsy wooden houses; dirt, poverty, strange odours, swarming humanity, and the eastern sun blazing down upon it all.

Kucheng, which we reached at seven-thirty in the evening, is larger and more prosperous, but the pattern of these towns of the great plains is always the same. In England the kindly folds of the earth, green mantled and fertile, embrace with a very lovely tenderness the towns and villages. But the plains of China have no such quality. They afford no natural shelter, barely yielding enough stone to strengthen brick walls. The town is set on a vast, indifferent level of earth; there is hostile dust in the air at the first breath of wind. Trees have a hard struggle, and wood for fuel is scarce. Acres of cultivation depend on laboriously transported water, and the desert is ever watchful for any slackening of human effort, ready, it would seem, to sweep forward and in a brief space of time erase the handiwork of man.

Yet given peace the cities grow and thrive. Kucheng had an air of pleasing rural prosperity, though signs of military encampment were many, and the streets were blocked by wagons loaded with stores. Outside the city there were hastily constructed fortifications, which puzzled me, since 'Big Horse' was usually impatient of defence, thinking only in terms of advance.

The lieutenant who had met us at San-tai was on the staff of Ma Chung-yin, but the magistrate was a local man, presumably not much involved in politics and therefore not superseded. At first glance I was uncertain, but subsequent scrutiny brought the knowledge that I had known him in Tihwa. Though recognition was mutual, there was immediate

unspoken agreement between us to reveal no sign of previous acquaintance. That would have been dangerous in the presence of the officer, who might well have suspected my friend of plotting against Ma Chung-yin. Of this he was in no sense guilty, merely carrying out his duties, which were to preserve order and to dispense civil justice. He was a quiet, scholarly, and utterly honourable man, and I am glad that he came through the troubled times safely and with credit. Sir Eric Teichman was entertained by him some years later on his classic journey from China to the Indian border. By that time my friend had been promoted to Tao-tai, a proper reward for his discretion and abilities.

It was strange to walk beside him exchanging formal phrases; but we managed even so to exchange reassuring hints of friendship. Yet the pause was not for long. The lieutenant jumped upon our lorry and gave orders to proceed. We rumbled on our way to the gates of Kucheng.

A mission such as ours must, in China, be conducted with prescribed etiquette. On arriving at the city we asked time to remove the stains of travel from our faces and garments, but a second officer who had been sent to meet us gave instructions that we were to proceed to the General's quarters without delay.

We drove to a typical Moslem dwelling, sent in our cards, and were told to our surprise that Ma Chung-yin would see us immediately. Whether this boded good or ill we had no means of guessing. As we crossed the courtyard we were suddenly halted by several soldiers, who called out harshly: 'Tin-tsu! So-chu-chi-lai!' ('Stop—hands up!') We were naturally unable to refuse this request and were subjected to a thorough search.

Word then came that we were to enter. Dusk was upon the plains, and one by one the flickering oil-lamps were being lighted in the houses. I led the way. A door swung open. Rising from a couch in the middle of the room, 'Big Horse' came to meet us.

My first impression was that of a rather slight but very wiry figure, boyish in walk, but with the assurance and determination of a man. He did not indulge in any ceremony.

'La—ye—wei—sze—Wu-Hsien-sen?' he asked.

('Which of you is Mr. Wu?')

I instantly replied: 'I am,' seeking to make my voice as simple and direct as his had been.

For several moments our eyes met.

'Sit down,' he said at last, motioning towards seats at the long table.

I handed my letters to him and stated that we came as Peoples' Representatives.

He nodded and bent over the correspondence, which he read with the greatest attention.

Now I had time to observe him closely, and I saw that his face was thin, his eyes very bright. His figure was perfectly proportioned, having that trained look seen on racehorses of the finest breed. I recalled that he had claimed to be a youthful revolutionist and wondered what queer strains of idealism might be found in him. The care with which he read the letters puzzled me. I should have felt no surprise had he tossed them contemptuously aside, the strong, bluff soldier, impatient of scribblings. But no, he pored over them with every appearance of intense concentration. I realized that to-day he was a scholar, seeking to impress upon me that in matters of the pen he was my equal. To-morrow he might be a savage war-lord of the great plains ordering the execution of a thousand innocent victims. But to-day he was the great ruler, wise in matters of diplomacy. This encouraged me; for I felt that I could deal with him best at this level. I prayed that his mood might not change.

Suddenly he raised his eyes to mine.

'I learn there is trouble in Urumchi,' he said.

I determined to choose my words carefully in any reply. If I painted too rosy a picture of the town he might feel that it was so prosperous that its capture would amply reward the risks of the enterprise; on the other hand, if I spoke too despairingly he might feel that the city was at the point of surrender. I was therefore non-committal, denying the existence of any civil strife, but admitting frankly that there had been much loss and suffering in recent times. While speaking with frankness and without the least trace of evasion, I was careful none the less to give as little information as was possible.

All the while that we conversed his eyes never left mine. It was as though we were alone, so completely were the others excluded. And I was aware that during the exchange of

question and answer, a secret and silent duel was in progress, a matching of wills.

There was good in this man, I felt, though wild ambition had led him to criminal folly. How was I to reach the good? He was only twenty-three years of age, and I was almost twice that age. How could I win him to my way of thought without the danger that he might feel that I was presuming to instruct him? He had been a member of the Kuo-min-tang, I had heard, and his boyish admiration had at one time been centred on Chiang Kai-shek. How could I bring him back to those early thoughts, to the days before he became a war-lord with the blood of thousands upon his hands . . .?

'I will see you to-morrow,' he said at last. 'Meanwhile you are to share whatever comforts we can offer.'

He rose to his feet.

'Yang Po-ching, head of my political department, will attend to you,' he said. 'You are to be lodged in a Moslem dwelling not far from here. Ask for whatever you require.'

His voice was courteous, but his gestures were perfunctory. He seemed suddenly to pass through a stage of sadness to a mood of anger. With the stride of a young commander, he left the room.

Yang was a man of considerable attainments. A native of Chin-chow, he had studied in the 'Nankai Middle School' at Tientsin, and gave a nod of recognition when he heard my name. His colleague Yin was a native of Szechuen, and knew a great deal concerning Ma's earlier campaigns. They skilfully sought to impress us concerning their leader, mentioning that he had been highly trained in the Government academies and had at one time been an aide-de-camp of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Seeing that I was not very awed by these particulars, they came to more recent times, enlarging on the brilliance of Ma's victories in Shangtung and Honan, and telling of the huge quantities of war material which had been captured at the taking of Kucheng.

As to this last I was sceptical, and I said that no doubt if ammunition was so plentiful the town had been defended stoutly and that the losses of the attackers must have been heavy. This brought the admission that the killed and wounded were more than a thousand.

'No wonder your leader looks sad,' I answered.

'That is for the death of his brother,' said Yin.

Then we heard the full story of the battle.

Ma and his young brother (who was only twenty) had been in the forefront of the attack. In a moment of inspired but utterly reckless bravery, Ma Chung-chieh had attempted to climb the wall in the face of machine-gun fire. For my part I do not feel that Ma Chung-yin felt much sadness for the loss, that is, real inner sadness. Brothers are apt to be dangerous rivals to a general in his position, and thus to see them perish with honour is a very bearable disaster. On the other hand, there is great clan feeling among the Tungans, and while not very much regretting his brother's death, Ma might feel bound in honour to exact a terrible vengeance. Perhaps, however, his brother was still too young to inspire suspicion.

It was hard to decide how the death would affect my chances of success, I reflected. It was just possible, of course, that it might suggest to 'Big Horse' that it would be his turn next; but a soldier does not think about such things.

Our quarters were comfortable. We had agreed not to risk any detailed discussion for fear of listeners, and were thus soon asleep. I awoke much refreshed to find that my impressions of the previous day had arranged themselves in orderly fashion within my mind, and I felt ready for the strenuous ordeal of negotiation and eager to set about my task.

My spirits were rising and I felt equal to the situation. I think my companions were infected by my cheerfulness, for we had laughter and joking at our morning meal, which had been sadly missing for the past days.

'Have a care,' one of our number urged me; 'you do not know how quickly his mood can change.'

Then he told me of certain gossip which he had picked up. 'Big Horse', it would seem, was very fond of discussion on occasion and loved to address his council of 'advisers', all of whom had high-sounding titles and were the heads of various 'departments'. Some of them were very able men indeed, but there were naturally jealousies among them and the leader was careful to play one off against another. All this did not make for efficiency, and in addition to military disputes there were the various factions of the Ahuns for Ma Chung-yin to contend with, a combination which would have worn out a less vigorous brain.

'Do not be deceived by what I tell you into thinking that Ma is weak,' my informant concluded. 'He is strong, and it is always his will which is law in the end. But for all his strength of purpose he cannot avoid being pulled this way and that by his contending advisers, and you may perhaps profit by their dissensions.'

I asked him what were the opinions of the Ahuns, and he said that strangely enough they for the most part inclined towards peace. While it was usual for the priests to be the most warlike of all, they were in a sense far more in contact with the ordinary people than were the officers and experts, and they knew the intense war-weariness of the whole province. Further, there was no clear-cut issue of the Faithful against the Infidels. Many Mohammedans were opposed to Ma Chung-yin, and even some of his supporters were none too full of enthusiasm if the truth were told.

Hussain was a long-headed man and was able to give me much useful information as the time went on. How the news reached him I do not know, for he was as much under surveillance as the rest of us; but every day he had some fresh piece of gossip, and his news was always right. I reflected that in the East the trading impulse is so strong that nothing can thwart it. Hussain had friends among the merchants of Kucheng who thought more of the chance to do business with him than of the success at arms of the leader they were nominally supporting.

On the following morning we went for a short walk, as it was easy to discuss matters in the open. We learned that, after all, Ma had not sent delegates to meet us as he had promised in his telegram, and this news increased my forebodings. Yollbars Khan came to us with every expression of courtesy and said that Ma Chung-yin was drilling his troops on a field not far from the walls, and that if we would like to watch, a car was ready to take us.

We gladly assented and drove off to the parade ground, as Yin called it, though to tell the truth it was a flat piece of earth much the same as any other for a thousand miles around.

About one hundred men were ready for drill. They stood in even ranks, formed on the European principle, and were clad in shorts and singlet. In front of them were two poles about ten feet high and perhaps three yards or more apart,

with a sturdy cross-piece joining them about six feet from the ground. Demonstrating various exercises was a slender figure clad as the rest, and not till we were close upon him did I realize that this was Ma. Then I realized some part of the secret of his power. To him drill was not a matter of standing some distance away and bellowing orders for formation manœuvres; he believed in fitness, and to drill was to train the muscles in this force. Further, he could show to all his men that everything that he asked them to do he could do better, for it was his pride to be not only the leader, but the best all-round athlete in his army.

He swung down as we approached and at once came towards us, sweating and a shade out of breath from his exertions, but obviously in perfect physical condition.

'I am glad you have come,' he said. 'I wished you to see the sort of men I have in my army. We have finished the gymnastics now and the next part of work is sword drill. They are a fine body of young fellows, and I don't just teach them to shoot. After they've had my course they can defend themselves and attack with any weapon that comes handy!'

I looked carefully at the ranks before me. All the soldiers were very young, I noticed, and some were little more than boys. But all looked very fit, and when the sword drill began their skill and discipline were amazing.

First they went through the motions singly; then they faced one another and fought mimic battles in pairs. The pace was very quick and yet they showed no signs of tiring. Ma Chung-yin had undoubtedly brought his men to a fine state of efficiency.

'You like it?' he cried, coming to stand beside us, his face radiant with enthusiasm at this wonderful human machine which he had forged out of such apparently unpromising material.

I complimented him on his army.

'So young,' I concluded, 'and so soon to die!'

He looked at me sharply.

'That is the fortune of war,' he said.

'War is always misfortune,' I answered.

I wanted to make him feel what a pity it would be to see his machine destroyed, and I could see from the look on his face that I had succeeded.

Next came manœuvres, and once again the standard of efficiency amazed me. Furthermore, it was all useful formation work for fighting in open country. There was very little of the parade-ground prettiness about the display.

'Would you like to see the rest of my troops?' Ma asked; and when I answered yes, knowing he wished to demonstrate his power, he gave a crisp order, and within a few minutes there was a great parade of soldiers for our benefit and they marched past us, about a thousand in number, with full equipment, and carried out complicated exercises for over an hour. I had decided with Hussain that it would be well to show some lavishness to the soldiery and thus, with his word as our sole credit, we purchased forty sheep, two big cases of tea, and four hogsheads of sugar. These we ordered to be distributed among the men in the name of the Peoples' Association of Tihwa.

This was a very good stroke of work, for it pleased Ma, who was glad to demonstrate to his men what influential and wealthy people had come to him as suppliants, while to the men it hinted that we had come as friends. The price of our gifts amounted to forty thousand taels, which I assured Hussain would be refunded to him.

Once more we renewed our compliments to Ma Chung-yin, and I could see that he showed genuine and childish delight in our praise of his men. He gave a brief command of dismissal and followed the departing troops in his car. Yang and Yin, who appeared to be playing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to my Hamlet, now came once more to expatiate on the wonders of Ma's new army and to hint that we had seen little or nothing of it as yet.

All this, I knew, was designed to induce in us a frame of mind appropriate (from Ma's point of view) to our conference in the evening, news of which now came to us from Yin.

The meeting assembled at sunset. Ma Chung-yin took his place at the big table and we were ranged around it. Guards stood at the door; candles and oil-lamps gave a flickering light; outside could be heard the night noises of the city of the steppes. . . .

There was silence for a few moments and then Ma Chung-yin spoke.

'You have seen my army,' he said. 'What do you think of the situation now?'

'It is a very fine army,' I answered.

'Peace or war lies in my hands,' he said. 'My men are well armed and disciplined, and willing to die if I give the word to them!'

I said that while we in Urumchi could not hope to compare with him in military matters, nevertheless, we should fight well, as men always do in defence of their homes.

At this he broke into a long harangue, telling me with no little eloquence of how he had triumphed in the past.

'I am a young revolutionist,' he said, 'a follower of the Three Principles of Dr. Sun Yat Sen. I learned the arts of war under Chiang Kai-shek. My purpose in coming to this province was to liberate the people from the ill government of Chin Shu-jen. As your capital is still in disorder—no man holding responsibility—it is for the Peoples' Representatives to choose. The choice is simple, and I am sure that men of wisdom and great learning such as yourselves can be relied on to make a right choice.'

I replied that we had no authority to choose, but that all he had told me should be faithfully reported to Urumchi.

'I took Kucheng with ease,' he continued, 'and I know how weak are the forces opposed to me. The capital is as defenceless as Kucheng.'

I shrugged my shoulders with the air of one who does not easily part with secret knowledge.

'Doubtless you are well informed,' I answered. 'The troops from Manchuria are perhaps not very numerous. Nevertheless . . .'

This, I saw, was a shrewd blow. He had no knowledge of the arrival of the Manchurian volunteers.

Already he was less boastful, and more wary.

'Tell me,' he said, 'what is the financial position in the capital?'

It was my policy to say as little as possible; but whenever he paused in blowing up his balloon-like dreams to puncture them as politely as I could manage. I knew that I must not, above all, do anything to infuriate him and must keep my irony within bounds; but I was determined to plant seeds of doubt in his mind, phrases and ideas of simple but piercing character, which might haunt his waking hours.

'Let me speak frankly,' I said. 'Our finances are not only

poor, they are in shocking disorder. Both Governor Liu and Commander Sheng have little skill in these matters and already the state of the currency is a grave scandal. You, who are a philosopher and statesman as well as a soldier, know how grave a thing this is. Soon there will be complete bankruptcy.'

He looked at me keenly.

'You are of that opinion?'

I could answer with some truth that I feared it constantly. 'Big Horse' sat in silence for a moment, plunged in thought.

'Remember,' I said, 'I am not here to represent the Government but the common people.'

'Yes,' he said, 'I know it. Yang has told me of your work and of your good name for helping the suffering. I too am known for my kindness to the poor.'

And with that he was off upon a long rambling discourse in which ethical discussion was mixed up with hints as to how currency should be regulated, the poor made rich, the army disbanded, the crops doubled. It was an amazing mixture of ignorance, egotism, and shrewdness; even in the most ridiculous flights there was usually a leavening of common sense.

Listening carefully, but saying no word, I realized that it was true enough that this remarkable youth had dreams of a world empire. From a variety of sources he had picked up fragments of information concerning everything, and by means of a retentive memory had made them his own. Much was entirely wrong, and what was right in itself was made useless by errors of proportion, but it was not the ramblings of a madman to which I now listened, but the dreams of a schoolboy of genius who had made a large part of China his playground and now coveted the rest of the world.

Sentence followed sentence. It was always: 'As I tell my advisers . . .' I saw with astonishment that he lived on the calm assumption that he knew everything, and that while learning every day from fragments dropped by those around him, he continued none the less to keep up the amazing fiction that he had nothing to learn.

I affected admiration when at last he paused. Perhaps it was not entirely an insincere awe with which I regarded him, for much that he had said had come near taking my breath away.

'You are indeed a great statesman,' I told him. 'They know

little of you who think that you rule only by the sword. I had been led to think of you thus, but now I humbly acknowledge my error. War has made you great, but you are greater than war. The time has come for you to found your empire and bring the benefits of your reign to all mankind.'

'You are right,' he said. 'I will start now. My rule shall be founded on the will of the common people whom you represent. If I can be of any service to humanity in Urumchi I shall be only too delighted.'

'You are too shrewd a man,' I said, 'to become lost in that quagmire of intrigue and bankruptcy. . . . No one can save Urumchi without money. Only if the Central Government makes the necessary grant can the situation there be saved.'

Again I had got home. He was having continual difficulty with his finances, and the idea that he might become inextricably tangled in the difficulties confronting Urumchi was a new and a disturbing thought. He knew that in the light of his past record his chances of financial support from Nanking were nil.

'Very well,' he said at length, 'where can I feed my troops?'

'Where your heart calls you,' I said. 'To the south.'

He leant forward into a circle of lamplight, clasping his hands.

'Southward,' I said, 'lie your own people, the Moslems, true believers, who look to you. Their lands are rich and food is plentiful for your horses. Your men, too, will be content, and you can complete their training at your leisure. . . .' (He gave me a questioning glance as I said this, since my words might be held to imply that I had noted deficiencies in his troops.) '. . . Sinkiang is a great territory,' I continued, 'and when you have made three-fourths of it yours, who will be able to stand in your way?'

'There is no one now who can stand in my way,' he said.

'No one,' I assented, 'that is, in Sinkiang. . . .'

It was the look in his eyes which told me that my point was won. In those last words I had fed his dream of empire. Turn south, he was thinking; fatten my horses up, drill my men, lay in stores. . . . Leave the city of the bleak north until it falls through civil strife. Then take the whole province . . . and after that. . . . Who knows? . . .

These thoughts were apparently stamped upon his normally

impassive features. Looking beyond his eyes I could see them moving in his brain. Suddenly he burst into another endless speech, the underlying theme of which was that no one but I had understood him and that he was indeed an emissary of peace as I had said.

I let him talk; nor did I press the claims of the south any further lest he should become suspicious; but I knew that now he was busy in calculation all the while he talked, and that the idea which I had implanted was already taking firm root.

I was careful to add that we in Urumchi were in close touch with Nanking and managed to suggest that military aid had been promised. The only reference which I made to Russia was indirect. I said that it would be a pity if owing to civil war in Sinkiang certain outside powers might benefit by extending their influence.

Our interview was now drawing to a close. The cold air of the night upon the plains was creeping into the room. We stirred uneasily, yawning and stretching our limbs. Grotesque shadows were leaping up the walls. Only Ma Chung-yin still showed vigour. My colleagues who had joined in the talk occasionally, but always to advantage, were silent. Chao, the Tungan delegate, had been particularly eloquent—but he too had run out of words. Ma Chung-yin was also quiet at last. Half turned in my direction, he looked at me with curious intentness as though determined to weigh my character correctly and estimate the value of my words. At last he rose.

'We will meet again,' he said.

'To-morrow?' I asked.

'Perhaps.'

'Time presses.'

'What you have said requires thought.'

'The General has caused me to think too,' I answered.

He bowed stiffly, the first hint of real formality which I had noticed. What, I wondered, did this stiffness portend? I glanced at my watch and saw that the conference had been in progress for three hours and that it was now close upon midnight. All that while 'Big Horse' had remained keen and alert. He had offered us no refreshment and had dispensed with all the ceremony which prolongs business discussion in China. I knew him for a ruthless destroyer, but even this

knowledge could not completely neutralize the persistent impression in my mind that there was good in this man.

I was beginning now to gain an insight into his character, of which the main element was energy. The man was a source of power. Too early in life he had found means to apply it and had thus made grievous errors; but already he was maturing; it was as though I were watching him age before my eyes. If he could curb and direct those tempestuous impulses, making them the driving force for a well-considered plan, he might yet be of use to China. No one knew better than I that our country had need of such a man.

Yang and Yin hinted to us that it was disappointing that we had not been able to express some message of welcome to the General. This they said would have made a very good impression. I replied courteously that we had not come to make a good impression, but to deliver certain messages according to instructions given to us by an All Races Congress in Urumchi. Had Ma Chung-yin renounced his intention of advancing, that would, I said, have made a very good impression indeed upon us!

CHAPTER TWELVE

OUR MISSION BEARS FRUIT

'Fame or skin—which means the most to you?
Skin or fortune—which is easiest lost to you?
Lose or win—which has most cost to you?

'The dotard tends to squander,
The miser invites plunder;
A man content shall feel no shame,
Who knows when to pause incurs no blame.
Thus live and long remain.'

LAO TZE (Chou Dynasty)

CONFERRING WITH Hussain and my other colleagues, I asked what they thought of the situation. Hussain said that it promised well, but that we walked along a precipice of possibilities. He confirmed my impression that Ma Chung-yin had fewer men than we had feared. He had started upon his march with three thousand men and one thousand of them had already perished. As against that there could be no doubt that he had captured over seven thousand rifles, some machine-guns, and a great deal of ammunition, so that his troops were well equipped. Also, he could offer the inducement of proper equipment to those whom he wished to enlist—this last a very serious factor.

We agreed, however, that Ma was no longer the utterly self-confident war-lord, and Hussain confirmed my opinion that the talks had gone as well as could be expected. We had achieved nothing definite—but to have weakened Ma's resolution was an important step.

Hussain, whose shop at Chi-chuen-yung was the centre of a network of branches extending over all the province, was as pious as he was wealthy, and no day passed without his reciting five prayers. To the casual observer they appeared as a gentle form of physical exercise, but there was no doubt in my mind that they meant a great deal to my friend. I questioned him concerning them and he said that though all were desirable, the first was the most important, but that it lost its virtue if not repeated at the prescribed hour. This, he added, was a

device of the Prophet to encourage early rising among his people.

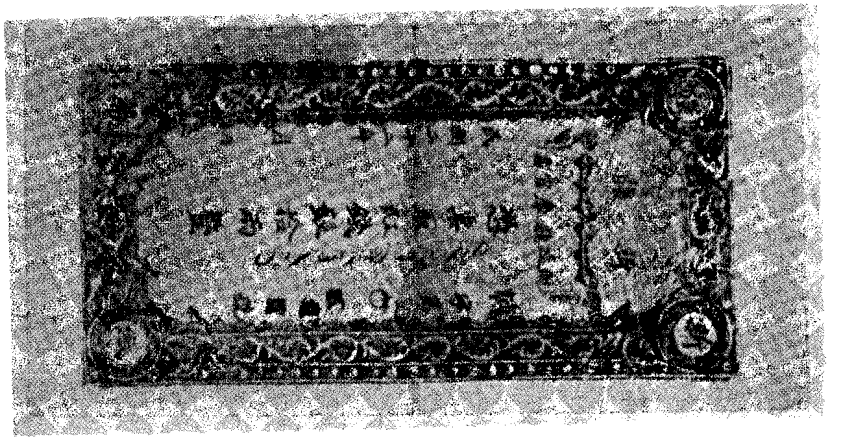
In these days I lived in Moslem fashion, obtaining a close picture of their customs and ways of thought. I became so acclimatized that I acquired the habit of stroking my non-existent beard by way of greeting, which caused great laughter among my Chinese friends when I inadvertently did it after my return.

Perhaps the most trying thing when living among strict Moslems is that the womenfolk are never seen. If they go out they wear heavy hoods and for the most part they seem to remain indoors. I never caught a glimpse of our hostess during the whole time of our visit. The leaders of modern Turkey were right in proclaiming that no progress was possible to their nation until the women were freed from this ridiculous seclusion.

We drank mare's milk (kumis), ate delicious food, and slept very comfortably on rugs strewn on the floor. We were well cared for and had no cause for complaint. It was clear to me that 'Big Horse' wanted to make a good impression upon us, for what end I was not sure. On my mentioning to him that a friend of Chao in the town had been a victim of looters, though in no way opposed to the new régime, he at once issued orders that all the goods were to be found. The next day we were told that all were back without the least exception —even small ornaments being returned. I knew this was not entirely from good feeling, but from a wish to demonstrate power. In fact, Ma asked me point-blank: 'What do you think of my discipline now?'

It was in truth excellent. The soldiers drilled twice a day and were forbidden to loiter in the streets when off duty. On the other hand, they were paid regularly in paper money and at stated times were allowed to purchase whatever they pleased in the shops. The local Chamber of Commerce had been prevailed upon to 'advance' notes backed by a million taels of silver, but already there was a scheme for the issue of a further two million without backing.

Although we were watched unobtrusively there was no longer any noticeable restraint upon our actions, and I profited from this to visit Lan, the manager of the local Yung Sheng Sun Company, a prosperous trading concern. He told me that



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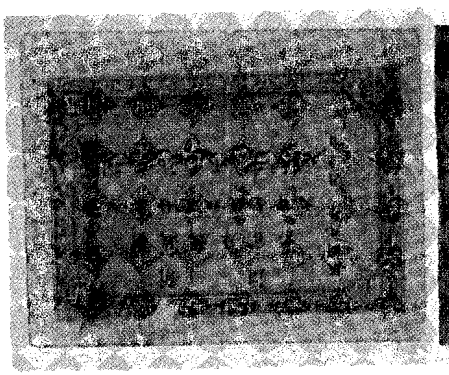

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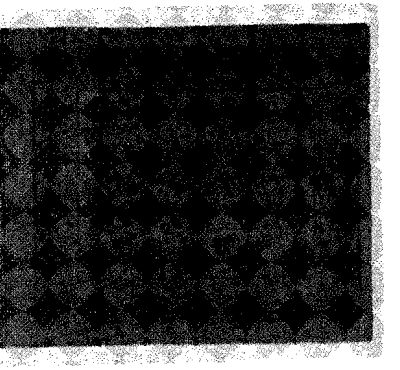


3

PAPER NOTES OF SINKIANG PROVINCE:

1. TEN TAEL NOTE 2. TWENTY-FIVE CENT NOTE
3. TEN CENT NOTE OF OILED CLOTH

the fighting had been indecisive for some time, but that the main attack had begun on May 29th at dawn. It had been ended by a mad rush to climb the walls which had cost a great many lives but had proved successful in the end. Within three hours the victory was assured, for those who had seized machine-guns upon the walls had been able to turn them upon the defenders, of whom large numbers had been slain. The Chinese troops, after a brave beginning, had broken and fled. They had wavered just as Ma's attack was beginning to falter, and a bold lead at the critical moment might well have transformed the whole scene. But Commander Li had been killed and General Li Hai-jo had been captured, so that the resistance had been without proper leadership.

Fighting had gone on in desultory fashion till darkness, but by ten in the evening, said Lan, all was quiet. Here and there groups of Chinese, Mongols, and Russians had sold their lives dearly, but in general there had been abject surrender, sometimes followed by massacre. A good many prisoners had certainly been murdered in cold blood, but then the attitude of 'Big Horse' had seemed to change. Out of the fifteen hundred Government troops remaining when the slaughter was ended he had picked out only three hundred for enlistment in his force and had disbanded the rest, making them each a present of cash. Not much damage had been done in the business quarter of the town, and Ma's first thought had been to set trade going, certain of the soldiers having been detailed to rebuild damaged premises. This was a new aspect of Ma's character, and I deduced from it that his advisers had been having good effect upon him. He was, as I had guessed, beginning to see himself as a statesman—which role was all to the good.

On the few occasions when I came into contact with Ma he did not appear hostile, but there was no sign of real friendliness. He did, however, ask if his hospitality was to our liking and asked that any roughness might be excused as inevitable when an army was on the march. I did not like this last remark as I thought it might be a hint that he was about to resume operations, but it seemed to have been uttered without any subtle undercurrent of meaning, and was in fact the prelude to an invitation to a formal banquet.

The farewell feast was on a grand scale, every one of any

importance being invited. The food was Chinese, but there was no pork served. Wine, however, flowed with some freedom, and there were many jests. Ma Chung-yin revealed himself as addicted to schoolboy humour of the broadest type, but it was not altogether unkindly and he seemed to get more jovial as the meal proceeded.

All at once he turned to me and said, as though it was a small matter which had slipped his memory:

'When you get back to Tihwa tell them there is not going to be any trouble in Sinkiang. If any difficulties arise tell them to send you along to me and we will talk them over.'

That was all, but I knew that my mission had succeeded, and that for the present at least there was no danger of hostilities. One of Ma's staff, his chief secretary, had been in Moscow and asked me what in my opinion was the Russian point of view concerning Sinkiang. I returned a very guarded answer, wondering what was behind the question.

Ma's hatred of White Russians might have endeared him to the Soviet, of course, but I do not think it was till much later that they realized his strength and ability.

At the end of the feast Ma told us that he intended that Yang should return with us to negotiate for peace. The basis of the agreement would be that the Government at Tihwa should be left in peace while Ma was to go to the south and pacify that region, having (subject to ratification from the Central Government) the rank of Commander-in-Chief.

I was very unhappy as to the future, for I believed that Ma Chung-yin might use his authority in the south to build up a crack army and then march north against the capital. However, if war can be postponed, that is something, and I felt that for the time being I had acted for the best, and had steered the discussion far better than I had dared to hope.

But my troubles were not yet over. The negotiations, which I had dreaded, had been easy; the return journey, which should have been a triumphant progress, was a nightmare.

We left Kucheng on the morning of June 7th, accompanied by Yang, and arrived at Fu-yuan at nine o'clock to find Lieutenant Ma and Magistrate Liu there to welcome us with a feast. But though they were cordial, their news was very bad. They said that a Tihwa 'plane had flown over on the day before and had dropped two bombs—without doing any

damage. Earlier that morning, said the lieutenant, two other 'planes had appeared flying very high. The soldiers had fired at them without success. Had they bombed Kucheng? If so, did that mean that despite our reports to the contrary hostilities were recommencing?

I said that while I knew nothing of the previous day's bombing—which was probably an error, I thought to-day's 'planes must belong to the Eurasian Line. Flights were now in progress, I said, from Berlin to Shanghai. If the soldiers saw any more large 'planes flying high they must not fire at them. This might have very grave consequences.

Later that day I had further cause for uneasiness. We encountered a thousand armed troops moving in a straggling column towards Fu-kang and the surrounding hills. I recognized them as Hodja Nyas's men, and suspected him of trying to provoke some incident for his own ends. I therefore went straight to the leader and protested that what he was doing was very unwise, since negotiations of the friendliest possible character were in progress between Tihwa and Kucheng, the understanding being that pending their doubtless joyful conclusion there should be no movement of troops on either side.

Hodja Nyas himself came to me and gave his word of honour that the present march had no military significance. The grass was used up at the last encampment and the wells had failed. It was necessary, therefore, to move in search of fresh pasture.

I accepted his word, apologizing for having misjudged him, and then we moved on. Yang had been as fervent as I in his protestations. Above all, he did not want to be caught between two lines of troops in a sudden outbreak of war!

The situation was very difficult, however, for I knew that it was not enough for Hodja Nyas to be innocent of military aims; it was imperative that he should avoid all appearance of strategic advance if peace was to be preserved. How right I was in my fears was proved when we passed by the last of Ma's outposts and arrived at Fu-kang. Here we found the Russian camp in a state of great activity. Men were preparing their horses and getting together their food supplies. I could tell that something was afoot, and I was anxious.

My protests carried no weight with the subordinate officer, who could only tell me that he was carrying out the instructions

of his superior. I therefore pushed on as rapidly as possible to see Papinkout, brilliant but somewhat erratic leader of the White Russians.

Papinkout was the colonel in the White Russian army who had been responsible for the *coup d'état* of April 12th. He was tall and thin, a typically trained military official of the Tsarist type. He was very stern and reserved. He never talked much during the meetings unless upon his own particular subject—the military point of view, and even then his speech was very brief. I always paid great respect to his opinions. He must have been a very successful officer under the Tsarist régime, and it was very bad for him that his Government had collapsed so that he had had to take refuge in Chinese territory and become a naturalized Chinese subject. He hated Ma Chung-yin, who had slaughtered his countrymen. He would never consider any compromise with Ma, and he always urged Sheng to take the initiative against him.

He was courteous to me, but quite definite in his refusal to trust to the good faith of the other side. Pilot Li, he said, had warned him of a dangerous concentration of troops on the slopes of the hills ten miles away. He had received instructions from Sheng to be as cautious as possible and to make no advance till I was safely back; on the other hand, he had been told that it was vital to prevent the outflanking of Fu-kang. Well, what was he to do? I was back now, wasn't I? And Hodja Nyas's troops were moving. I didn't dispute that, did I? As for this talk about new pastures, it wouldn't deceive a child! He knew Hodja Nyas and all the rest of that murderous devil Ma's bloodthirsty crew, and if I thought he would trust them any farther than he could throw his riding boot—with his foot in it! then I was wrong, for all my diplomatic training, for which of course he had the utmost respect. . . .

Nevertheless, I believe my suggestions did prevent him from dashing off post-haste to battle, and that was something.

I now received word from Sheng that he was delighted to hear of our safe return. It seemed that the fact that we were late had led to unpleasant rumours as to the fate which had befallen us. I was also told that my friends Tao and Kung had left for Nanking by the Eurasian 'plane to make a report on the position and to ask for assistance. In fact, the start of the aeroplane was delayed, and so I only missed seeing the

delegates by a couple of hours—a great pity, since I had a good deal to tell them, quite apart from the fact that they were my good friends. However, there was to be a strange sequel to that flight which I little guessed at the time.

As soon as I returned I went in the dusk to give a full report of the negotiations to Sheng Tupan and Governor Liu, who received me with open arms. In the ill-lit bare room with a huge torn map on the wall, leather arm-chairs, and a table littered with papers, we sat and discussed the situation. The whole question turned on whether Ma Chung-yin were not attempting some trick. I did not by any means dismiss the possibility, but I stressed the fact that for all his recent success he was in no position to attack our city, and that he was in no mood to risk the destruction of his newly trained army in an attack upon us. He wanted the title of 'Commander of the South', which did not acknowledge directly the authority of Tihwa, but, on the other hand, did not deny it. The problem in all such situations as this, I said, is how much have you to lose? We have nothing to lose by accepting these terms unless you are of the opinion that the passage of time will see Ma Chung-yin grow stronger and ourselves weaker. Do you think that? Sheng was doubtful and asked what I thought. Well, I said, I am not blind to the danger that Ma will gather a large army in the south. The men are there and they are mostly Mohammedans. But it will take some time, for the state of affairs down there is far from settled; and even if Ma can arm some of them, he will soon be short of arms. Where is he to get supplies? The Central Government will certainly do their best to see that no arms reach him. They may be critical of your administration here, but they are completely afraid and distrustful of the Ga-Szu-ling. For years he has given them trouble. News from the surrounding districts is good, and once we can readjust the currency our city will prosper. Time is on our side.

Sheng agreed with me and Governor Liu, after some cogitation, gave his assent. It was agreed to keep the negotiations going and in the meantime to consolidate our own position. I thanked them once more for their kindly welcome and retired for the night.

The next day I said good-bye to Kwan, who was returning to Ili. I was sad to see the last of my companions of travel

desert me, for although we had been a good deal apart in recent days, there was still the most cordial friendship.

I now went with the delegate Yang to introduce him to Sheng Tupan and Governor Liu. Yang made a good impression and in the evening there was a great banquet in his honour, followed the next day by a meeting of the Peoples' Association to give him an official welcome.

This latter celebration was held in a Moslem house near the South Gate. I presided and made a few introductory remarks, but the occasion was made memorable by a speech from Governor Liu. In a low but deeply moving voice he pleaded for peace. He had seen so much purposeless slaughter—he told us—that only one wish remained to him. He was an old man, and it was his desire above all things that in the few years, perhaps only months, which remained to him he should be able to prevent the outbreak of war.

The feast was in Moslem style, with baked meats, fried rice, ice-cream, and other dishes. We ate with knife and fork, the Moslems depending on their skilful fingers. Now that the prospect of war had lifted every one was in good spirits, but Hussain refused to be optimistic and said that not till the armies were disbanded would he believe that peace was possible.

This, at bottom, was my own idea. I knew that with two suspicious armies facing one another across mountain and plain no real tranquillity was possible, and I wished that the negotiations would be speeded up so that Ma Chung-yin should set off to the south. But nothing can be hurried in China, and even though I wished for haste I knew that all appearance of it must be avoided, since if Ma once thought that we were impatient to be rid of him he would decide to stay.

In the evening Sheng Tupan held a further conference with Yang. Now that the time of definite decision had arrived, it seemed to me that Sheng was too hesitant, unable to make up his mind. Perhaps any one in his position would have felt equally dubious. Nevertheless, for my part, as an onlooker without personal interest, I felt that I understood the whole situation and that my thoughts were crystal clear. Yang must be sent back as soon as possible. I therefore went so far as to take up pen and paper from Liu's desk and write out a draft of seven points to be the basis of peace terms. Liu, after

reading it, said, stroking his beard: 'Tau-don, tau-don,' meaning, 'Precisely. . . .' Sheng also expressed agreement. Yang now gave his opinion that General Ma Chung-yin would be satisfied. His departure was arranged for the next morning.

The principal clauses were four in number:

i. Ma Chung-yin to be Commander-in-Chief in South Sinkiang, subject to the approval of Nanking.
ii. Ma's troops to be counted and enrolled with the regular army of the province.
iii. Tihwa to be responsible for the pay of these soldiers.
iv. All magistrates in South Sinkiang to be appointed by Tihwa.

But just as I was congratulating myself that all was well, trouble broke out again on my own doorstep and I was a witness of a second *coup d'état*. This burst upon us with startling suddenness, and though I saw the main happenings, it was only by persistent investigation that I penetrated to the roots of the affair. Various accounts of what happened have been given, but they are all inaccurate. Here for the first time is the truth.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

INTRIGUE IN TIHWA

'Men may sleep in the same bed yet have different dreams.'

Ancient Chinese Proverb

AT A GOVERNMENT meeting held on May 17th Governor Liu had shown to us a telegram received by him from Wang Ching-wei, head of the Executive Yuan at Nanking, expressing admiration of the work done by Sheng and Liu in restoring order in Sinkiang. The message added that as soon as possible General Hwang Mu-sung would be sent to Sinkiang as 'Pacification Commissioner' to investigate conditions on the spot and make recommendations to Nanking. A day later we received a telegram from the Chinese ambassador in Moscow stating that some of Hwang Mu-sung's staff would be leaving Nanking by air within the week.

We heard nothing more, and had no means of knowing whether the scheme had been proceeded with, but on June 10th, just as peace terms had been agreed upon and delegates had been chosen to return with Yang to Ma Chung-yin, a message arrived that Hwang Mu-sung and his staff had come and were now at the airport.

The delegates were already in the car when the news was brought, but Yang at once said that he must remain to interview the Government Commissioner. The mission to Ma Chung-yin was therefore postponed.

It is surprising on what small chances the fate of human plans depends. Had the mission left all might have been well, but the additional delay was to prove fatal to our hopes of peace.

I hurried to welcome Hwang with several others of the council, and explained to him that no disrespect was intended by the delay in greeting him, the fact being that the telegram announcing his coming had not turned up till after the arrival of his 'plane. Such delays were a commonplace of our telegraph system in Sinkiang, though when you consider the difficulties under which the operators laboured, vast distances,

primitive apparatus, and tribesmen always ready to steal the wires for ornament, it is perhaps surprising that the service functioned so well.

In my own mind I was doubtful as to the possible effects of this arrival. Sheng had a thousand urgent problems upon his hands, and he did not relish the idea of consulting with an official from Nanking, who was utterly unversed in local conditions, before taking urgent steps. In fact, Sheng left the capital for the front after only one brief and very formal meeting with Hwang.

My two friends Tao and Kung had met the Government Commissioner at Lan-chow in the province of Kansu, where their eastbound 'plane had halted just as the westbound 'plane arrived. There had been a consultation, as the result of which the Commissioner persuaded Tao to return to Tihwa with him, while Kung was entrusted with the duty of taking Tao's son with him to Nanking.

Tao had several times criticized Liu harshly, not always, in my opinion, with justice. Liu had not been able to prevent Tao from going to Nanking, but had hoped that at a great distance from the scene, and charged with Government business, he would be circumspect in his statements. When, however, he learned that Tao had accompanied the Commissioner back to the capital he was somewhat surprised, as were we all.

Hwang Mu-sung was installed in the house of the ex-Governor Chin Shu-jen and later in the day was conducted to the presence of Governor Liu, who reported on the situation. My personal opinion of Hwang was not entirely favourable and I questioned his fitness for the mission entrusted to him. He did not seem to realize that the writ of Nanking could not be expected to carry full weight in Tihwa until it was backed by force. He acted as though the Central Government had merely to pronounce judgment to exact obedience, whereas the least study of Chinese history should have shown him that authority diminishes in proportion to the square of the distance, in this case two thousand miles, from which it is exercised.

Pilot Li was making regular aerial reconnaissances, and on the day of Hwang's arrival he reported that Ma Chung-yin's troops were advancing towards San-tai. I urged that no

precipitate action should be taken and that any counter moves should stop short at the point of military necessity. Sheng agreed to remain strictly on the defensive, but the White Russians were indignant, saying that as soon as the advance guard of Ma's forces was found in a vulnerable position it should be attacked at once. I consulted with wise old Liu as to the position, and he informed me sadly that in his opinion a clash was now inevitable.

Sheng left immediately for Fu-kang.

I took Yang with me to interview Hwang so that he might have both points of view concerning the negotiations at Kucheng. I found that the Commissioner had very little grasp of the position, and laboured tactfully to make it plain to him. Hwang seemed to think that Nanking had only to reprove Ma Chung-yin to halt him, and it was difficult for me to point out in Yang's presence that a long series of similar reproofs had produced little effect and that a few tanks would be a far more convincing argument.

Meanwhile I noticed that among the merchant classes and the common people of our city there had arisen a most unreasonable optimism concerning the results likely to be achieved by the visit of Hwang. The Peoples' Delegates sent a deputation of some twenty or thirty persons to wait upon the Commissioner and to present him with a petition setting out four cardinal points for the rehabilitation of the province. Hwang received the suppliants in person and promised to give their requests all possible consideration.

Reports now reached me which led me to abandon all hope that peace might be preserved in our unhappy province. Ma Chung-yin was now definitely on the move and his forces were on the outskirts of Tze-li-chuan. He sent a promise that he would advance no farther, stating at the same time that his movements were precautionary and had no aggressive intent. But even if that were true, the Government front at Fu-kang was only one stage removed from the advancing column and such close contact made a clash inevitable.

Governor Liu had now abandoned all hope of peace and was wondering whether it was worth while to proceed with the negotiations. There were great difficulties involved in sending delegates back with Yang, and the risk for them would be considerable. Sheng settled the point by taking over all

cars for the use of the army, so that there was no transport available.

Hussain received private advices that there had been considerable dissension among Ma Chung-yin's advisers—the Ahuns advocating peace, and the military executive clamouring for war. War means a chance of promotion or booty to the soldier, and this news did not surprise me. When I had been at Kucheng Ma had been under the influence of the priesthood, but now his mood had changed as Hussain had predicted, and he was under the sway of his staff.

Similar conflict of opinion persisted in Tihwa, as I have already described. My view, which I shared with Governor Liu, was that we must not on any account place ourselves in the wrong by an attack. The officers of the Kansu units held that military necessities must prevail over political considerations and urged Sheng, with White Russian support, to launch an offensive at the first opportunity. It was important, they said, to throw Ma's advance out of its stride before it gained momentum. My misgivings were set down as personal pride; it was stated that I did not wish my mission to appear a failure.

There was, of course, a good deal to be said for the military point of view. After all, our lives were at stake. Besides, the men from Kansu knew all about Ma. One of them, Hu, a highly intelligent officer, once member of the directorate of a law college, gave me a brief account of the career of 'Big Horse', with much additional information as to his treacheries. After professing allegiance to the Kuo-min-chung, he had taken the field against them, and on being defeated had fled to Nanking, only to return later with promises of peace which he immediately broke, secretly rallying his forces for a treacherous attack from the rear. Hu brushed aside all my personal impressions of Ma, whom it was clear he regarded as dangerous vermin. All the negotiations which I had conducted were merely a screen for military operations. Delay had been vital, said Hu, after the serious losses sustained by Ma's forces in the attack on Kucheng, and only for that reason had he been willing to negotiate.

The Eurasian Corporation aeroplane which had brought Hwang from the east had returned on the following day. It was a huge monoplane with powerful motors, and from Tihwa to Shanghai would not take more than two days. Three

similar 'planes had been ordered for the Eurasian route, but one had crashed on a test flight in Berlin before it started, taking to his death that brilliant pilot Schmidt, who had surveyed the course.

There were four private passengers on the return flight, I noted, each of whom had paid the fare of 1,230 dollars.

At last Yang left for Kucheng, accompanied by Lu Lun, the Peoples' Delegate to Ma. But by the time they were on their way fighting had already started.

Several first-hand accounts came to me afterwards concerning the battle of Tze-li-chuan, which was one of the most desperate engagements of the war. A valley lay between the two armies and the crossing was fiercely contested. Ma Chung-yin had a cavalry force of more than two thousand, and an equal number of infantry supported them. He himself was in charge of the attack and had every prospects of victory, for the Government troops only numbered two thousand and his rapid advance had disconcerted them.

The commander did not attempt to retreat, however, but advanced to meet the attackers. A hand-to-hand struggle followed, and after several hours it appeared that Ma's troops must triumph. Suddenly a cry of joy broke from our ranks as a column of Manchurian volunteers swept down on to the enemy's flank. They came not a moment too soon, for Sheng himself had been almost encircled by the desperate Tungans.

At the same time a terrific hailstorm broke upon the battlefield and in a few moments the temperature fell to close upon freezing-point. This was a great advantage to the Tihwan troops, for they were far more warmly clad than their adversaries. Ma Chung-yin had trained his soldiers to undergo great hardships and to wear only the lightest uniform. They were a fine body of men, but even they could not withstand this amazing change of temperature. Their frozen hands could not hold their weapons and soon Ma was forced to retreat.

Nightfall saved them from utter rout, but the jubilant Chinese troops, astounded to find that the redoubtable enemy were, after all, so vulnerable, gave them no rest in the hours of darkness and the retreating forces had no chance to take shelter or build fires. Morning came and at once the battle was resumed. Cold rain continued, and the cavalry on which Ma had relied for victory were hopelessly impeded by the mud.

At length he saw that only complete withdrawal could save him from annihilation, but even so he gave the order too late. Many of the infantry were left with their flank exposed, following the retreat of the horsemen, and these threw down their arms and fled. The Tihwa troops pursued with vigour, and more than one thousand rifles and four machine-guns fell into their hands.

News of the victory caused great joy in the capital, but reports which reached me at the same time gave me much uneasiness. The Russian and Manchurian troops were always lax in discipline, and a few of them had been looting, which had enraged the population. I went to see Liu to warn him of this, and we at once took measures to strengthen the civic discipline. The City Defence Chief enrolled patrols and all reliable citizens were asked to hold themselves in readiness for an emergency.

The victory was a great triumph for Sheng, who sent us a telegram from the front saying that he was advancing to Fu-yuan and setting up new head-quarters there. Ma had retreated to Kucheng, and it was rumoured that he was even now preparing to evacuate the city. Poor Yang, Ma's delegate, was still wandering along the front in grave personal danger and without means of reaching his master. Lu Lun had returned as soon as the news of fighting was confirmed.

Organization, good strategy, and, above all, the amazing luck of the weather, which was utterly out of character for the summer season in Sinkiang, had all contributed to our victory; but personal bravery had played an important part, and no record of the battle can be complete without a word of praise for Lieutenant Liu Chen-pang of the volunteers. He was nicknamed 'Fleetfoot', and was utterly contemptuous of danger. Cut off from his main body, with only a dozen men left to him, he had continued to attack with vigour, and when the enemy finally wavered and fled had pressed forward without waiting for support, capturing three hundred rifles and taking a large number of prisoners.

Sheng sent word that Ma had already commenced to retreat towards Mu-lai-ho with one thousand regulars, two thousand Moslem volunteers (these preferred to enlist with 'Big Horse' rather than to remain and risk execution for rebellion), and three thousand camels which he had seized to carry his stores.

He had also taken hostages, among them General Li Hai-jo, captured at the attack on Kucheng. Sheng planned for a vigorous pursuit, and entrusted this task to his chief of staff, Chen Chung, for whom he organized a special mobile unit. But either this officer lacked energy or Ma was too quick for him. The enemy troops slipped through the mountain passes and reached Turfan in safety. It was not wise to pursue them so far as this and Chen Chung returned.

The 'plane arrived from the east next day with four members of Hwang's staff who had left Nanking ahead of him, and whose departure had been notified to us from Moscow. It was typical of the ill luck which dogged this mission that the staff sent in advance should arrive last of all and that the telegram announcing the chief's departure should come to hand only after his arrival. It may seem unreasonable, but this sort of thing strengthened my impression that the Commissioner would do little good. His staff was unwieldy in the extreme, and the new arrivals reported that still other members of it were on their way by the Siberian route. Some had reached Tacheng, we learned; others were still in Semipalatinsk.

However, Hwang gave a great display of activity and soon the wires to Nanking were choked with messages, while the Commissioner had arranged that he should be lent several extra clerks to help in his office, so great was the pressure of work. Six Moslems were selected to travel to South Sinkiang by way of Kuldja and report on the situation there. Hwang guaranteed the expenses of this mission and arranged that its members should receive a handsome honorarium. Though Hwang himself knew little of the province, there were two members of his staff who had wide experience of Sinkiang. One of them had actually been present at the assassination of Governor Yang in 1928.

The outbreak of hostilities did much to weaken the position of the Commissioner, for the common people who had looked to him as a deliverer saw at once that now it was on Sheng and his army that they must depend. And at this moment Sheng returned suddenly from the front to strike a blow against possible intriguers. In a sudden tragic denouement all the intrigues and conspiracies came to a fatal end. The story of the second *coup d'état* in Tihwa demands a separate chapter.

It was a distressing affair to all who had the best interests

of the province at heart, and did much to convince me that the time for me to be of use to my country in Tihwa had not yet come.

However, in reading my eye-witness account of what occurred it is well for the reader to remember that I was a disappointed man who had seen his cherished work fall in ruins. I do not want to blame any one unfairly for the actions, wrong as I held them to be. It may be that there were facts which I never knew. But judgment on all these points can best be made after the telling of the story.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE SECOND *COUP D'ÉTAT*

'Weapons, however beautiful, are instruments of ill omen.'

LAO TZE

PERSONAL ILLS, when they are tedious and weakening, loom larger than public misfortunes, however grave, and though the news from the south continued disturbing I was more concerned with the severe attack of dysentery which laid me low. In spite of my precautions I had somehow contracted this complaint. The work which our Relief Committee had done was carried out amid heart-breaking conditions of filth and hunger; our equipment had been scanty, and, worst of all, we had been working against time; so it was perhaps not surprising that I had succumbed to infection, for though we had prevented an outbreak of plague and had kept the typhoid epidemic within bounds, dysentery was widespread and I had come into contact with it every day when on my rounds.

One of our Chinese doctors treated me with patience and skill, but it was the kindly father at the Catholic Mission who did me most good. He had his own specific; a certain white mixture, the formula for which I never learned; this seemed not only to stabilize alarming internal fluctuations, but to act as a powerful tonic to my system as a whole. Nevertheless my progress was slow, and when Sheng announced that he was returning from his troops to deal with important matters in the capital I was far too ill to go out to meet him, which I would gladly have done had I been able, since, apart from official considerations, I esteemed him as an efficient and reliable commander.

On the following day, however, having received an urgent summons from secretary Tao to a special meeting of the council, I felt that even at the risk of a relapse I must make an effort to attend. Through my illness I had lost touch with the situation. News of day-to-day happenings had come to me and matters in my own sphere had been brought for my attention, but I had missed the chances of personal

ONE OF FOUR KITCHENS FOR REFUGEES ORGANIZED BY THE RELIEF COMMITTEE

conversation which hitherto had enabled me to estimate the trend of events and act accordingly. I did not know whether the depression which I felt was merely a consequence of my condition or whether I was right in sensing trouble to come. My heart was heavy when I realized that energies which should have gone on constructive work were being wasted in shabby intriguings.

But though I was possessed by this sense of perpetual unease, I had no reason to expect any immediate denouement, and I prepared for that morning's meeting without the least intuition that tragedy was close at hand. It was no sort of day for any human darkness. The weather, which had for some while been more uncertain than living memory could recall, had at last settled down to the normal cloudlessness of summer in Sinkiang. The sky was blue, the sun serenely golden; the first strong heats of the season were softened by the hint of cool airs from the hills.

I was glad that we were to meet in a garden. Meetings were apt to be long and discussions to be barren; it was good to be able to rest the mind by the sight of massed flowers. It was to Yang that we owed our leafy retreat. He had been a great lover of gardens, and throughout his years of administration he had given much delicate care to laying out and planting the yamen grounds, where peonies and azaleas now made a wonderful pageant of colour year after year. There was a pagoda, a lily-pond, an embowered alley; peacocks spread their finery amid the blaze of flowers; parrots screeched in the branches. I shall never forget those thin cries in the hot air.

The great diary which Yang bequeathed to us was entitled *The Journal of Pu Kuo Tsai*, words difficult to explain to a Western reader. Pu Kuo Tsai may perhaps be translated 'House of Self-Examination', but this last word has a sense of 're-making' in our language, since self-criticism is a means of self-improvement. Pu Kuo Tsai was the name of the house which Yang had built for himself in the Eastern Garden. Here in summer-time he would work from early morning till dusk, transacting official business or placing upon paper precepts for his own guidance or for the instruction of those who would follow him. The retreat had survived the devastations of war and misrule. Calm and beautiful, it was no place for the shedding of blood.

Our committee met in the guest-house twice during the week as a general rule. I had done my best to systematize our deliberations, instituting the careful keeping of minutes, the preparation of advance agendas, and debate by the proposing and seconding of resolutions. What Sheng had in mind for this emergency meeting I did not know, but I thought that it was probably some financial difficulty, since our monetary resources were strained by the necessity of keeping comparatively large forces in the field. Much as I grudged military expenditure, preferring to see revenue allotted to social improvement, I nevertheless realized that our defences were still the most important consideration. But my own knowledge of orthodox finance filled me with grave misgivings concerning certain expedients by which less experienced members of the council thought that money might be easily found, and I particularly wished to be present if such questions arose this morning.

The meeting was called for ten, but I rose early, since I wanted Father Hillbrenner to give me a thorough dosing before I went to what might prove a very long session. He reassured me as to my condition, remarking that he detected some improvement, but that I must still be very cautious or recovery would be delayed. Then, somewhat ahead of time, I went to the yamen where, at the entrance to the second gate, I encountered Chen Chung. He seemed in excellent spirits, greeted me warmly, and said he was glad to see me about again; and I returned his salutations. If I detected any hidden anxiety in his manner I paid little attention to it, and when we parted he said: 'I will be with you in a few minutes.'

As I entered the inner gate I saw a group of guards, which I thought at first was strange; but I am by temperament unwilling to jump to sensational conclusions, and I argued to myself that Sheng, returned from the army, had naturally brought with him a detachment of soldiery.

I came into view of the building where we were to hold our meeting. All was quiet, and there on the terrace sat Sheng Tupan, alone, and very still, a fan in his hand. On my approach he rose in greeting. I made suitable apologies for not having waited upon him till now, and explained the nature of my illness. He was gravely sympathetic, saying that he too had suffered from dysentery and still sometimes had a

recurrence of the trouble. After a few words he sat down, as though preoccupied. I asked if the meeting were assembled, and he said that I should find them waiting.

I went to the doorway, and at once was aware of something strange in the air. In the usual way the prelude to our deliberations was a period of noisy conversing. The meetings were a general clearing-house for gossip, and members would pass from group to group exchanging greetings and news. But to-day I was greeted by silence. The council members sat at the long table gazing uneasily at one another, and no one spoke a word. Nods and a lifting of eyes acknowledged my entrance. I took my place at the table, myself preserving silence. Next to me sat a Tungan member, one of my friends and helpers. 'Tao and Li are arrested,' he whispered, hardly turning his eyes towards me.

I did not catch the words, and they were not repeated. There was whispering at the head of the table, and I heard it suggested that we should require a new secretary if we were to begin the meeting. That was Tao's post, and I saw that his place was empty. The half-heard whisper of my neighbour at once became clear in my mind and I realized that the crisis I feared was now come to a head.

The Governor now went out to the terrace to inquire from Sheng Tupan whether we were to wait a while or to make a start in his absence. The reply was that he advised us to begin, first appointing one of our number as a temporary secretary. Chang, Minister of Education, was thereupon called upon to keep the record, and Liu, as chairman, announced that the council was in session.

But I do not think that any one at that table was thinking of the agenda for the day. Our ears were alert, our voices low; in so far as dignity permitted we all gave anxious glances to doors and windows. Action was imminent, we knew; but on whom would the blow fall? I could not help reflecting that around me the very air was tense with individual fears. Few had been wise in all their dealings, and though most must have felt, as I did, that they were innocent of any wrong it is not enough to be innocent when political quarrels flare into open conflict. Absence rather than innocence is to be desired at such times, I reflected, but though I was inclined to wish that I had stayed away, curiosity conquered my fears.

Outside the sun shone and the flowers shed indifferent beauty upon the air. Sheng sat on the terrace waiting. Above the mumbled discussions of our table the voices of parrots and peacocks could be heard in the garden, tense screechings and rattles, softened by distance, but very trying to the nerves. They seemed to me to be an ironic commentary upon the hardly less futile human utterances to which I now feigned attention.

Suddenly there came the sound of heavy boots upon the path outside and a messenger came up to Sheng running. He received brief orders and was gone as quickly as he had come. There was a lull in the speech around me. I felt the muscles of every one present stiffening with dissembled attention. Again there came a messenger, and then I was aware of confused comings and goings outside, followed by a few moments of silence.

Then there came seven shots.

They broke upon the silence with hideous and alien savagery. Now there was silence again, through which dismayed birds uttered high-pitched cries. Then more silence, and a drift of warm air from the garden, bearing with it the perfume of flowers.

My illness had left my body weak, but my mind had a dream-like and disembodied clarity. No detail was lost to me of what followed. Sheng came slowly in from the terrace, his figure black against the sunlight as he paused a moment at the door. Then he came and sat next to Liu, looking straight before him, ignoring questioning glances, waiting till the whispers at the far end of the table had died away.

When there was silence he rose to his feet.

'I have to inform the honourable committee that my return to the capital was made necessary by news which reached me of a serious danger to us all.

'Tao Min-yuo, Chen Chung, and Li Hsiao-tien have been guilty of a plot against our Government.'

'I have therefore already inflicted upon them the penalty of death.'

During the pause which followed these words I could feel that considerable relief was flooding into the breasts of many of those near me. Seven shots, but only three victims; and it seemed that all the shooting was over. Sheng's tones did not

suggest that he regarded any of those present with ill will or that his purging of our ranks was to go further.

Swiftly he continued to speak. Placing a document upon the table, he informed us that this was a letter from his colonel-in-chief informing him that Li had attempted to win over several of the officers to revolt. He gave brief details of the activities in which the other dead men had engaged, and his manner showed that he felt deeply injured at such intrigues against him while he was defending the city against its formidable foes.

'In view of such happenings as these,' he ended, 'I cannot agree to be controlled by a committee. I therefore offer my resignation, and will at once retreat with my troops to Tacheng.'

Now Liu spoke, his voice trembling with emotion. He was an old man and the trials and responsibilities of the past months had weighed heavily upon him. He too would resign, he said. I saw that there were tears in his eyes.

I did not want such talk to infect others, for it was essential that right forms of government should be preserved. Rising, I urged the necessity for calm. By the deaths of certain of our number a new situation had arisen. It must be faced, and right action taken for the good of all.

Discussion ensued. It was clear that some doubt existed as to the attitude which the Central Government might take to the happenings of the day, and indeed to the whole position in Sinkiang, which might easily be gravely misrepresented. It was therefore urged that we should go at once in a body to Hwang, the Pacification Commissioner, and ask that he should inform his superiors of our wish that no changes should be made in our administration for the present, and that the Tupan system should continue. Chang, our new secretary, was chosen to speak and I was to second his efforts. In a few moments we were wending our way in solemn procession towards the dwelling of the envoy from Nanking.

The situation was very delicate, for two at least of those executed had been close friends of Hwang. I knew that any incautious utterance might well precipitate more trouble.

The position in which Hwang was placed following Sheng's drastic action was not an enviable one. Tao, the most important of the executed men, had been intimate with him, and

this fact led to much whispering. It was said that the Commissioner was watched by guards who, though nominally charged with securing his safety, were in actual fact concerned with restricting his movements.

In receiving the delegation, Hwang must have been very puzzled. No mention was made of what had occurred, and I do not think that at the time Hwang had any clear idea of the position. However, he bowed and smiled, promising to send a telegram to Nanking announcing that the majority of the council were in favour of the retention of the Tupan system, in view of which he himself asked that it should be continued. In saying the majority he was wrong; the support for the Tupan was now unanimous. The minority had ceased to exist.

There was great anxiety in the streets following the shots, and when the Governor failed to arrive at a memorial service at which he was to have spoken, the report spread that something serious was afoot. Soon the truth was widely known. There was great sympathy for Governor Liu, who was well beloved. Though his great age was against him, he gave to the administration that atmosphere of patriarchal authority so essential in China, and which Sheng, ruling alone, would have lacked.

After the shooting the Governor sent in his resignation and retired to his private house, saying to his personal friends that he was perplexed at what had happened during his time of office, and that he would take no further part in public affairs. It was thought he felt that the people would wonder why, if the accused were guilty, there should have been no proper trial.

Liu's threat of resignation, coupled with the evidence of the trust which the Governor inspired, was a serious matter for Sheng. It did not suit him at all that by this action Liu should show disapproval of his measures. He visited the Governor personally, reminded him eloquently of the perils they had shared together, and begged that he would not now desert him when their work was unfinished. He had news, he said, that the irrepressible Ma Chung-yin was already making plans for bloodthirsty vengeance, and he feared the results of any appearance of disunion among the authorities in the city.

Liu was persuaded to remain in office for a further month, and a joint statement was issued under the signatures of

Governor and Tupan announcing and justifying the executions and phrased so as to allay public alarm. At the same time a request was sent to the Central Government asking that some high official should be sent to Tihwa to investigate the position, since it was feared that untrue reports might reach the Chinese capital from prejudiced sources.

Hwang was not entirely lacking in astuteness, however, and he now sent a telegram to Nanking which showed that he realized which way the wind was blowing and was anxious not to offend Sheng further—an anxiety easy to understand in view of the fate which had overtaken previous offenders! The telegram read as follows:

> 'Sinkiang being a frontier province has its own special problems and in my opinion these would be aggravated were there no central figures with full powers commensurate with their heavy responsibilities. The provisionally appointed Sheng Tupan and Governor Liu are certainly such figures and have maintained peace and order in exceptionally difficult circumstances. In view of these facts I request that the Central Government confirm them immediately in the posts they now hold, for this will strengthen their authority and benefit the province as a whole. I hope you will give early consideration to this request, since it is urgently desirable that the natural anxieties of the population shall be allayed without delay.'

Sheng's position was further strengthened by a message sent from the Maintenance Committee praising his conduct and asking for his official recognition, while the Manchurian volunteers sent an open telegram, which was published in the Press, proclaiming their loyalty to the Tupan and to the Governor. Liu, however, in a personal message to Nanking, asked to be released from office, owing to his advanced age, but he added his word to the other requests for Sheng's appointment to the military command of the province.

Nanking, perceiving that the usefulness of Hwang's mission was ended, recalled him with every mark of praise; and Sheng, now that all was settled, was meticulous in recording respect to the departing envoy. The official story was that Hwang, having by his presence lent the weight of the Central

Government to the rulers of Tihwa, had materially assisted their victory over the rebellious Ma Chung-yin, and this being now successfully accomplished, it was only right that he should be given a triumphant farewell ceremony to speed him on his way.

This was forthwith arranged, and Hwang left us amid a mutual exchange of flowery compliments. It was noticeable that Liu and Sheng each spoke in glowing terms of Hwang.

Following Hwang's return there was silence from Nanking, and it was freely rumoured that the Central Government did not intend to confirm the appointments of the present rulers of the province without exhaustive investigations on the spot. Tai Chi-tao, president of the Examination Yuan, was mentioned as a likely envoy for this task, and newspapers containing news of this appointment, and stating that Tihwa had been informed of it, arrived by 'plane before there was any official telegram announcing the new plan. On July 20th Governor and Tupan sent the following message to Nanking:

'Your telegram of the 7th July has not yet been received though we are aware of it from the newspapers. In view of this knowledge we cannot refrain from expressing the grave anxiety which the news has caused in Tihwa, and our fears for the safety of the province unless prompt action is taken to establish a permanent government.

'News of our humble intentions has doubtless reached you from our representative at Nanking and His Excellency the Envoy Hwang Mu-sung has sent you news of the happenings in Sinkiang and has expressed his great relief that the mission on which he departed by your esteemed commands is successfully terminated. His good work has contributed greatly to the calming of the province and a difficult situation has been dealt with through his good work among us, which has won for him universal esteem.

'We, Liu Wen Lung and Sheng Shih-tsai, now acknowledge our debt to your wise advice which we have done all in our power to follow. . . . All of the provinces are bound to rely upon the Central Government, for many necessary works must be carried through which are far beyond the means of local authorities. Especially is this true of a frontier province.

'Even in time of peace we are dependent upon your bounty, and still more must we rely upon you in these troublous times of war. Sinkiang is a province so far from the seat of government that there is a great lack of capable officials, and finances are weak. War has wrought great destruction of late and still we are harassed by rebellion. No constructive work is possible without government, and great as is doubtless our ignorance we have wisdom enough to know that only by obedience to our National Government can we be saved. This obedience we hereby promise and have sworn in the presence of the Omnipotent God. We will do as you ask us and dare not in any matter run counter to your will. Accept in these matters our whole-hearted pledge of loyalty, of which this message is a humble token.'

Hwang's departure should have been a brilliant occasion. Guards lined the streets and there were plans for a procession. In fact there was little more than perfunctory leave-taking, for the envoy was already in his 'plane when we arrived at the airport and acknowledged our salutations only by the removal of his hat. The members of his staff who were to travel with him had gone to the large airport beyond the city limits, since only there was there room enough for a heavily loaded 'plane to rise. Hwang therefore descended after a flight of some fifteen miles, and the real departure took place with few to speed him. I had followed by car and we exchanged a few words of leave-taking.

With him there departed several members of his staff and a few merchants. The pilot told me that they would be in Lan-chow by the evening.

The newspapers which the 'plane had brought from the east were very conflicting in their opinions concerning events in Sinkiang, and some of them blamed our administration for too great independence of action, a charge which was palpably unjust in the main. I was surprised to see how much space was given to events in our province, and was confirmed in my opinion that the frontier territories had a great future. But I was ill at ease concerning the present course of events.

On the 23rd of July the Tihwa Government was informed by telegram of Hwang's safe arrival, and three days later a report was read by Liu in which we were given an account

of the recommendations made by Wang Ching-wei in the Executive Yuan at Nanking.

This report of Wang's made three main points:

1. That the diplomatic relations of the province should be controlled by Nanking.
2. That all military should be under the Central Government.
3. That there should be religious freedom and racial equality throughout Sinkiang.

The report concluded that on the acceptance of these conditions by the provisional Tupan and Governor it was unhesitatingly recommended that they should be confirmed in their present posts.

There was a great deal of information in Wang's report, most of it accurate, and I gathered that to do Hwang justice he had reported very fairly.

A rumour now arose that it was proposed to divide Sinkiang into several provinces. This, while very reasonable in view of the great size of the territory, was objected to by the province's representative in Nanking, who gave excellent reasons for his opinion.

1. The total population of Sinkiang is probably little more than two million, only equal to that of a single district in Chekiang or Kansu. If the province were divided, migration might leave one or other administrative area entirely unpeopled, which would be very bad.
2. Sinkiang was not financially stable and needed a heavy subsidy. If it could not support one administration, how could it support three or four?
3. The province had sufficient disunion already; why add to it by establishing new boundaries from which further troubles were certain to arise . . .?

Meanwhile Hwang had given an interview to the Press at Nanking which is worth quoting:

> 'I flew from Suchow to Tihwa on June 9th with Wang Ying-yü, Chien Tung, and Tao Ming-yuo. Our arrival was expected and brought great relief to the people of the province, who in many acts and speeches demonstrated their loyalty to the National Government.

> 'It was a matter of congratulation to me that I was thus given an opportunity to solve the many problems of the territory and to suggest measures by which the burdens of the populace might be lightened.
>
> 'I little knew how powerless I should be to help them.
>
> 'The chief problems which confront the authorities are centred in South Sinkiang, so I at once sent representatives to those districts to invite co-operation and at the same time arranged that proclamations of the Central Government should be put up in Kuldja, Tacheng, and Altai. I humbly hoped that by these gestures the goodwill of the Central Government would be made evident to the people.
>
> 'On June 26th Tao, Chief Secretary; Chen, Chief of Staff; and Li, Head of the Aviation Corps were shot in the Tupan's yamen.
>
> 'After these tragic events all post and telegraphic services were stopped and communication with the outside world was practically impossible. Thus all news sent out was propaganda from one side only.
>
> 'There is still no unity in Sinkiang.
>
> Even though war is temporarily ended the southern districts are in practice independent.
>
> 'The recent *coup d'état* had increased the fear of the common people and had a very bad effect on public sense of security.
>
> 'Racial differences have been worsened.
>
> 'Communications are very poor and trade is not good. Recent happenings have not improved trade. The value of the note issue is rapidly falling and there is grave shortage of necessities.
>
> 'I trust that following my report the experts of the National Government will give all possible attention and help to this unhappy territory.'

This was plain speaking. Nevertheless on August 3rd came news that Liu and Sheng were officially appointed. Another chapter in the history of Sinkiang was at an end.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MY JOURNEY WITH LO WEN-KAN

'The north wind shatters the stubble and lashes the sands,
Summer is gone too soon from the earth's wide bosom.
Yet snow in a single night brings spring to the western lands,
For the whiteness shines like a thousand pear trees in blossom.'

CHEN SEN (written in Turkistan during the Tang Dynasty)

ON AUGUST 23RD Governor Liu handed us a telegram from Nanking saying that the Central Government had decided to send the Foreign Minister Dr. Lo Wen-kan to Sinkiang for an inspection tour. Only two members of his staff would come with him—Lin and Feng. They would arrive by the next 'plane.

Lo was at that time the Foreign Minister and also the Minister of Justice. It was indeed unexpected that the Central Government should send so important an investigator.

I went to see Sheng in order to bring to his notice the fact that the appointment of Lo to visit us showed most clearly the importance the Central Government attached to the border province. I asked him to be frank in his talk with Lo, since it was essential to tell the whole truth concerning local conditions in order that Lo should report accurately to the Central Government the state of affairs.

Sheng now told me to do my best to entertain our distinguished guest and appointed two members of his staffs to assist me in the work. While the guest-house was being decorated under the supervision of the magistrate a message came from Lan-chow saying that Lo and his staff would arrive on September 2nd. That morning it started to rain, and most of us thought that Lo would be delayed by the weather, but at one o'clock in the afternoon Magistrate Chiu suddenly sent a messenger to tell me that Lo was expected at any minute. I immediately got into my car to rush to the airfield where the military and political leaders were already waiting. Even under our shelter the ground was a pool of mud and overhead rain poured down steadily. The manager of the Eurasian Air Lines told me that it was very dangerous to venture a flight

in such bad weather, and said that he had already sent several telegrams to stop the 'plane from coming; but, of course, if the 'plane had already started before receiving his messages, then the only thing was for the pilot to take the risk.

We were still patiently waiting when suddenly a 'plane appeared in the sky. Our party and the band immediately lined up, and in a few moments it slowly glided down, making a perfect landing. I stepped forward to offer a welcome to Dr. Lo, whom I had known for many years. Liu and Sheng then came up and I introduced them. The new arrivals, four in number, were now driven to the guest-house where an official dinner was served. Lo asked me many questions concerning myself and told me in return that he was no longer touching any alcohol because, on account of his eye trouble, the doctor had warned him to stop. I laughingly reminded him of what a good drinker he used to be.

Lo had travelled all the way to Sinkiang by air and was rather tired. It was already dark and he wanted to have a bath, but that was impossible in Tihwa after dark, for all the city gates were closed and there were no washing-places within the walls. However, we managed to have the gates reopened, and I took him to bathe in Gmerkyn's house in the south suburb—who insisted that we should stay for supper.

Next morning Sheng asked me to lunch with him, and told me that there were several matters which he would like me to communicate to Lo, which I did accordingly. Then Lo, Liu, and Sheng held a talk in the guest-house, during which Liu sent a messenger to fetch me, saying that they had appointed me one of the Government Committee. Next day, however, Lo told me that I was, instead, appointed to be Commissioner of Foreign Affairs in Sinkiang under the control of Nanking. I wished to refuse the new post, for I had been working in the diplomatic service for a considerable time while in China proper, and I wished to be free to undertake more constructive work.

Several scores of Moslem delegates came to see Lo, who received them most cordially. The Maintenance Committee next held a reception in his honour in the private garden, at which I took the chair.

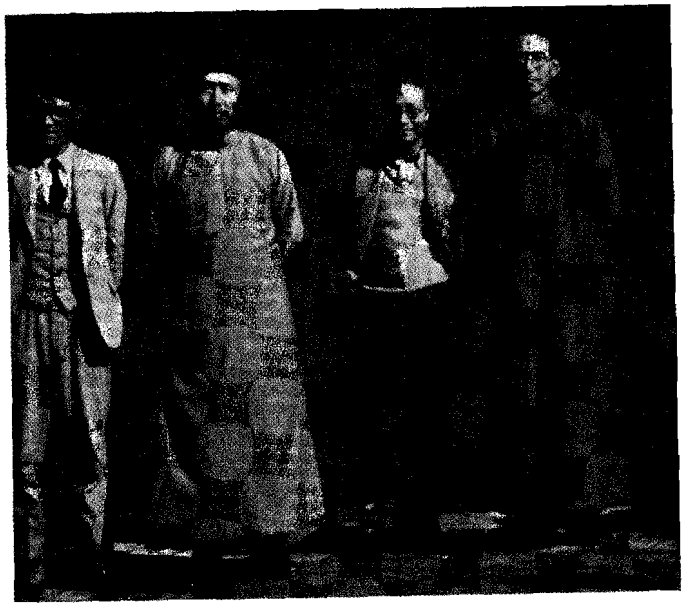
On the morning of September 7th, Governor Liu and Sheng

Tupan formally accepted their posts from the Central Government, represented by Lo. All civil and military leaders were present, together with some women guests, including the wives of Liu and Sheng. The Soviet Consul also attended with his whole staff. Liu and Sheng raised their hands to swear loyalty.

The Soviet Consul was now for the first time presented to the Chinese Foreign Minister, and I noted that he observed diplomatic usage with extreme care. Then a grand feast was spread at which everybody present took part. Both the hosts and the guests drank their fill, and some even beyond it. Liu and Sheng made speeches, both emphasizing the point that the civil and military governorships of the province should be clearly divided. After the feast Lo went with the Moslem leaders to the mosque outside the South Gate where he made very detailed inquiries among them, while communicating to them the concern of the Central Government for the Moslem population of Sinkiang. His interest was very warmly applauded.

The All Races Association gave a feast of welcome to Lo at the Chekiang and Kansu Guild, and at the same time congratulated Governor Liu and Sheng Tupan on their acceptance of their new posts. At this meeting the delegate of Ma Chung-yin was asked to speak. Lo also visited the Consulate-General of U.S.S.R. and a feast of welcome given by the officers of the Manchurian volunteers. Once again I felt that all this feasting was a waste of valuable time.

The most difficult problem faced by Lo on his visit to the province was the antagonism existing between Ma Chung-yin and the Provincial Government. Ma was still in Turfan and Shan Shan showing no intention of withdrawing, and the Government still felt as though they were sleeping on pebbles. Old fears and ancient grudges were rampant, and always in the background was the threat of war. We all expected that Lo would conduct the peace negotiation himself, for as a high official of the Central Government his words might produce great effect upon Ma, who had already sent a representative to welcome him to Sinkiang. Lo most generously agreed that he would undertake the task, but not as the representative of Tihwa, since he wished to show impartiality. He proposed to visit Ma alone with only his small staff, but through the urging of Sheng, who felt that an immediate understanding must be



ARRIVAL OF DR. LO WEN-KAN,
NANKING FOREIGN MINISTER, SECOND FROM LEFT

WELCOME OF DR. LO BY THE MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE:
LO IN THE MIDDLE, SHENG SHIH-TSAI LEFT, LIU WEN-LUNG RIGHT

reached between the two antagonistic parties, Lo promised to take a brother of Sheng's with him, together with the local Government's Chief of General Staff, Liu Pin. Sheng meant by this gesture of sincerity to persuade Ma to come to the capital.

The party left by bus on the morning of September 9th. I regarded this trip of Lo's with mingled feelings of hope and apprehension, for no one among us seemed at all confident concerning the outcome of the trip, and nobody believed that Ma would return with the party. On the evening of the 12th Lo returned, together with several representatives of Ma, who had himself travelled with them as far as Dawancheng, but had declined the invitation to go farther.

On hearing that Lo had returned, both Liu and Sheng came to see him at his quarters. They were greatly exasperated by the refusal of Ma to negotiate in person, and the army leaders insisted that it was useless to carry the peace talks further since he was lacking in all sincerity. The atmosphere was very tense, and those who advocated war seemed to have the upper hand. Lo said, however, that Ma might be induced to withdraw if he were financed and his troops fed.

Lo at once sent Feng to Nanking to give a first-hand report. In the meantime he decided that he would proceed to Novo-Sibirsk to meet Dr. W. W. Yen, the Chinese Ambassador in Moscow.

Liu and Sheng appointed me and several others to accompany Lo by way of Tacheng and Kuldja, so we started to make arrangements concerning transport and supplies of Russian currency.

On September 15th the White Russians gave a party to Lo, and our departure was postponed for another day owing to a reception given by the Russian Consul-General. Then, when all was ready, we were again prevented from starting by the shortage of petrol.

At last, however, we were able to leave. The Government sent with us a guard of seven Chinese soldiers in case of trouble on the journey. On the 17th of September, at twelve-thirty, our two lorries took the road.

Unfortunately the last news I received before starting was disturbing. The situation had worsened and Ma's delegates were under detention, together with an important Tungan leader, on what charges I did not know.

Our five-hundred-mile journey took us four days. The summer heats were over and the weather was perfect, cloudless, but not too hot. For many miles the road was just a track across the desert, but more distressing than the works of nature were those of man. Outside the West Gate of Tihwa the once prosperous suburb was razed to the ground, and in one township after another we saw the same evidence of the destruction wrought by war. At Sui-lai, two hundred and forty miles from the capital, the post office and the yamen were gutted. I had been received in this building only a year before.

In Temple Valley the Mongols had set up three of their circular tents for us, and we were feasted on the everlasting mutton of the Gobi.

One of the Kasaks killed two sheep before our eyes, slitting their throats with his short knife so skilfully that he hardly appeared to glance at his victims as he dispatched them. He then skinned them with two or three quick movements and threw the jointed meat into a huge iron cauldron slung on iron stakes over a hole dug in the sand. Our meal was a first course of soup, followed by the huge lumps of flesh which we minced for ourselves.

That night our tent was guarded by members of the local garrison, Chinese soldiers whom I recognized as having been there a year before. A more lonely post of duty could hardly be found. They had had no leave and had rarely gone a dozen miles from their camp. But they were quite contented.

The 'Cold Blast Pass' was calm at our coming. Even in summer it is no place to linger. We pressed on with all speed, sometimes driving for sixteen hours in the day. Nomad tribesmen stared at us curiously, reining their magnificent horses. Sometimes they would raise their hands in salutation.

At one of our stopping-places the local magistrate let us have five of these fine beasts for a furious gallop over the plains, a welcome relief after the jolting seats of the lorries. The beating hoofs of our high-spirited mounts threw up a cloud of dust as we raced each other. I understood then the joys of nomad life.

At Tacheng, which we reached without incident, we found the citizens prosperous and peaceful.

My first duty here was to go to the Tao-tai's yamen to

collect all materials relevant to boundary questions—but I could find only one very crude map, drawn many years before by an inexpert hand. I recalled that in the Russian customs office at Bakhti, on my inward journey, I had seen an excellent map of the Sino-Russian border. In the event of any dispute the lack of a proper survey would be an awkward complication.

The boundary runs for about two hundred miles and has already been the scene of much dispute. The earliest frontier marks were laid down during the reigns of Kang-hsi and Yung-chen (A.D. 1662–1734), after which the Manchu Emperor Chien-lung again extended his territory for several thousand square miles, having quelled certain districts both to the south and to the north of Tien Shan. The Kasaks and the Buriat Mongols came under his power in turn and all those regions which had belonged to China in her most powerful days—that is, during the dynasties of Han and Tang—were once more included in her territory. These regions were called Sinkiang—which literally means the 'New Territory'.

Since the period of Hsien-feng (1851–61), however, there had been endless civil strife in China, which enabled the Russian Government to invade the states of China. A peace conference having been called, the Russians secured the promise of the Manchu Government to acknowledge the new boundary at 'the present karuns'—the line of frontier guard-houses. Subsequently territory beyond these karuns more than several hundred miles in area was lost to the Russians, and in the year 1864 they invaded Tashkent, during a period when both South and North Sinkiang were occupied by rebel forces. When the situation was cleared the special envoy Ming-yee concluded a treaty with the Russian envoy in Tacheng which altered the Chinese western boundary to a considerable extent.

There were three kinds of karuns, or boundary houses: permanent, moving, and provisional. All were guarded by soldiers under an officer of low rank. The moving ones used to move in set periods, some in spring and winter, others in spring and autumn, according to pasturage and seasonal conditions. The original purpose of these karuns was for the control of nomadic races; they did not in any way represent the national boundary. Therefore the permanent karuns were mostly placed at a distance of several tens of miles from the true frontier. When Ming-yee was charged to negotiate the

boundary problem with the Russians, he argued with the Russian delegates that the boundary ought to be placed at the farthest point reached by the karuns, but his argument did not avail to amend any of the treaties.

In 1870, when the boundary marks were finally laid down, the Russian Government again moved their boundary marks inside the Chinese territory, annexing several scores of miles and cutting the important road from Tacheng to Altai. In 1881, when the treaty was re-studied, the point was raised that it left some doubt as to the exact demarcation of the boundary east of Lake Zaisan, which together with all the adjacent pasture-lands had been seized by the Russians, to the great impoverishment of the Mongols and the Kasaks. Most of the high officials in the Manchu Government were absurdly lacking in geographical knowledge. When they began to realize the true position it was often too late.

In 1870 the Chinese envoy put up ten boundary marks in agreement with the Russian authorities. The signatures of both parties were affixed to this new treaty and documents were exchanged with maps attached to them to emphasize the trustworthiness of the pact. According to traditional rules, twice in each year both Governments should have sent high officials to inspect the marks together.

I went with Lin to the Customs Office at Tacheng to ask for the export and import figures for the past years, together with a schedule of the different taxes, in order that we might report on these to Dr. W. W. Yen. In the list there were more than two hundred categories of imports from Russia, of which tea, sugar, tobacco, cotton goods, and metals were the most important; while the exports from Sinkiang were only sixteen in number, being chiefly wool, cotton, and cattle hides.

My old friend Lu, one-time Tao-tai of Tacheng and now transferred to Altai, told me that he was resigning his post and that he had recommended me as his successor. He showed me the letter he had written and pointed out that the responsibility was very great, as the area controlled was immense. I was compelled to refuse, and told him that I had already a more responsible post.

Hussain, my old colleague, now turned up. His headquarters were in the city where he had built a three-story building very European in style. He complained that trade

was very slack and asked news of Urumchi. We talked in friendly fashion over old times.

He was very worried by the refugee problem, for thousands of Russian Kasaks were pouring into the district and food would soon run out. The frontier was so desolate and the distances so great that no patrols could hope to keep them out. The population of the city, normally less than one hundred thousand, had increased to one hundred and eighty thousand, 60 per cent of whom were Kasaks.

At Bakhti we were welcomed by a military band and entertained by Mr. Manjoss, young and handsome, head of the local Soviet, who together with his lovely young wife gave a party in our honour. Although the town is in the very heart of Asia all was in European style. We danced after dinner to gramophone records of fox-trots and waltzes under bright electric lights.

On the next stage of our journey food shortage became acute, and had we not taken our own provisions we should have fared very ill indeed. At one halt only cabbage soup was procurable, and even rye bread was lacking. There was now no cultivation, only the wide steppe. We were glad at Ayakuz to board our special train for Semipalatinsk, where the Soviet chief and our consul greeted us. The nominal head of the province was a Kasak, but his secretary, who wielded the power, was a Russian Tartar, a Communist Party man.

Our stay of three days in Semipalatinsk was enlivened by a visit to the circus. In a huge tent near the market a thousand eager peasants applauded wildly one of the best shows I have ever seen. Feats of horsemanship were performed which I have never known to be equalled. The performers were highly paid, I was told, and were a privileged class.

At Novo-Sibirsk, which we reached after about a day's rail travel, we met Dr. Yen and his staff and immediately began consultations. It was two years since I had last seen the ambassador, and we had little thought at our last meeting that we should next run across each other in the middle of Siberia.

A Government reception on the grand scale welcomed Dr. Lo. Russian hospitality is lavish, but consists largely in cajoling the guest to drink more than is good for him. Our host, the Commissar, had a charming habit of striking a match, which

he whirled quickly in a circle. Whoever was opposite to it when it went out had to empty his glass.

After several rounds of this Dr. Yen pleaded diplomatic immunity.

But this was one of many tricks with which our jovial hosts converted a formal occasion into a very convivial affair.

Having seen Dr. Yen safely on the train for Moscow, Dr. Lo and I set out for Kuldja, returning by rail to Ayakuz and then farther south to Salieuk, near the Chinese border. Here we left the train and proceeded by road in a very comfortable Ford car provided for us by the Russians, a lorry following with our luggage.

As country roads go in Russia, our present route was very good. Nevertheless it was rough going.

When we started we were told that we should reach the border by evening, but it subsequently came out that neither of the drivers had travelled that way before, so they asked of every one we met which route they must take. As passers-by soon were few in number and eventually were none at all, when the day wore on we became rather anxious. Darkness closed down and we decided to follow the telegraph posts.

At length our drivers came to a halt at the Russian army frontier post at Jarkent, where our arrival at such an hour created much surprise. At first they had no idea what to make of us, and as none of our party could speak Russian (I have since made some progress with that unruly language), the position had its humorous side. At last they telephoned to the Russian frontier post at Holkutz, to learn that there were thousands of people there, including their own consul, waiting for the Chinese Foreign Minister's arrival. From that moment we were shown exaggerated courtesy. They explained to us that we had been sadly misinformed as to the length of the journey. We were still forty miles from Kuldja.

We spent the night in their barracks, a stone building housing three hundred soldiers.

The garrison commander at Kuldja, Chang Pei-yuan, sent an interpreter by aeroplane when he heard of our position, and the flight was made in a very few minutes, although it was after dark.

Next morning we reached Kuldja, where huge crowds cheered us. In no other district of Sinkiang is the population

so dense, for the surrounding plains are fertile and afford excellent pasture.

Kuldja (the Chinese name is Ili) was perhaps the one place left in Sinkiang which merited the title 'Earthly Paradise'.

An open-air welcome was accorded to Dr. Lo, at which General Chang Pei-yuan presided.

From the platform I gazed upon the strangest collection of hats, for all the fourteen races of Sinkiang were represented there that day.

In the afternoon I went to see the father of my old friend Kung—the famous restaurateur. On arriving I found the old man working at his accounting table. He rushed out to meet me, expressing both friendliness and hospitality. He was a man of more than fifty, and the wrinkles on his face told most vividly of his industry through years of hard struggle. His restaurant, which had been opened for more than twenty years, had recently closed down. It was started by him single-handed and was the biggest restaurant of the town, but he had ceased business because, since the arrival of the volunteers from the north-eastern provinces, discipline in the town had been poor and the bad debts of the soldiers had destroyed his profits. He took us to the saloon and showed us many precious autographs left him by his distinguished customers. All his cooks were brought from Peking, and it was a matter of regret to me that we were unable to taste his famous dishes.

Kung senior had five sons, all of whom had been given a good education and were doing valuable service for the country; but the old man was still living in the same thrifty way, showing no pride in the distinction of his sons. He held to the principle that it was a parent's duty to educate his sons well, and that it was a son's to support his parents in their old age. This is an essential principle of Chinese morality, and Kung the senior was a faithful follower of his beliefs.

Kung, his eldest son, had been studying in China proper for more than ten years and had intended when he travelled with me to Sinkiang to see his aged father, but his duties had compelled him to stay in the capital, and even when the situation there was a little better, he still could not take leave, for he was appointed to fly back to Nanking.

All this while we had had little news from Tihwa, but now came the message that fighting had broken out and that Sheng

had left the capital to engage the forces of Ma Chung-yin. Dr. Lo had intended to go to the south, but a message transmitted from India to Dr. Yen in Moscow and sent on from there warned us that the southern frontier was disturbed. The Minister therefore decided that he would return to Nanking by way of Vladivostok, so we set out once more for Semipalatinsk.

It was still early in October, but already came the first snows. Our parting was near, and I inscribed in my note-book some verses of farewell to my chief:

The dust of the desert is grey
And white are the snows of the mountains.
Now from my mirror I know
That both are fallen on me.
Yet in my heart,
I feel the south wind blow
Your words, which bring hope to a people,
And friendship to me.
Who could foretell the storms I should weather,
How strange my adventures, serving our land,
Now on the threshold of age I stand
Yet still I will serve with humble endeavour.
Through long miles of cloud my keen eyes
Searched for your coming.
Long I have followed your steps, and now we part.
On the rim of the desert we met:
Now one of two birds is homing.
On the world's edge the thoughts of a still grateful heart.

Before Dr. Lo boarded the train for Vladivostok we were troubled by further news from Sinkiang. Fighting still continued in Tihwa and the trouble had spread to Tacheng, which had been so peaceful when we left. The Chinese city had fallen into Tungan hands and refugees were fleeing north to Russia.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE FOURTEEN RACES OF SINKIANG (1)

Chinese; Manchus (and their two allied tribes—the Hsi-po and the So-lun); Mongols (and their two allied tribes—the Torgut and the Chahar); Tungans.

'To the world's end I was married,
My lord is the King of Wou-sun.
To his strange tents I was carried,
With fleeces their walls are hung.

'Only mutton for food, and the milk of mares!
I long for my father's kingdom night and day.
Endless my exile, useless my tears.
O for the wings of a bird to fly far away.'

WOU-SUN-KUN-CHU
(Daughter of Han Emperor, married for reasons of policy to the King of Wou-sun (Kuldja).)

ALONE IN Semipalatinsk I occupied my leisure by setting in order the copious notes which I had taken of all I had seen or had been told.

When I stood in the main street of Kuldja (Ili) I could not avoid exclaiming: This town is a veritable museum of Asiatic types; but the same might be said of the whole of Sinkiang. At every bend of a twisting city street, at every desert halting-place, beside a dung fire built upon the barren mountain, the connoisseur of anthropology must feel the urge to seize a camera or sketch-block to capture for his collection some queer cranial development, some strangeness of brow or lip or eye. Sometimes there has passed me a type almost purely European, but olive-skinned and clad in the robes of the East; on another occasion I have seen black coat and creased trousers adorn a personality which might better have been shrouded in a lama's garb, so far from modern things was the slanted gaze. And the written characters which I saw in my wanderings had the same puzzling diversity. Some were pure Persian; others classic Chinese; sometimes the nature of a script would entirely elude me—though I could see in its signs of insects' and birds' footsteps, running from left to right.

There are fourteen distinct races to be seen in Ili: Chinese;

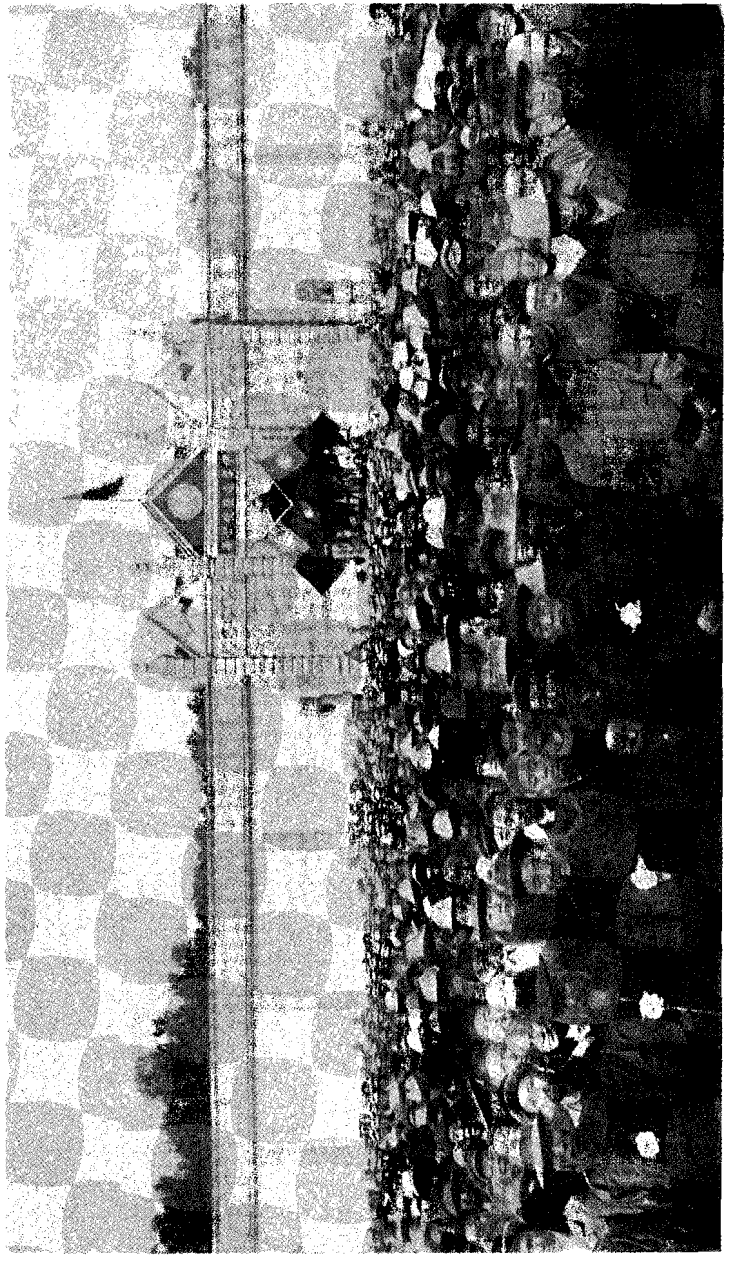
Manchus; Tungans; Mongols; Moslems (these are called Uighurs or the 'Chan-t'ou'—that is, Turban-heads); Kasaks; the Hsi-po, Manchus from Mukden; the So-lun, Manchus from Hei-lun-kiang in the north; the Kirghiz—in Chinese the Hei-hei-tze; Tartars, or 'Noghai'; Tadjiks; the Chakar, Mongols from Kalgan; the Torgut Mongols; and the White Russians. Many races, but only two religions: the faiths of Buddha and of Islam, each so remote from the other that no contact is possible; two creeds fated to bicker and war.

The Chinese

The earliest settlement of Chinese in Turkistan must have taken place under Wu-ti of the Han Dynasty rather more than a century before Christ. The Emperor was very ambitious and planned a great expansion to the west. So he sent one of his nobles, Chang Chien, a noted traveller, to spy out the secrets of Hsi-yu ('the western territory'), bidding him take with him a caravan of one hundred men. It is written that of this company only two returned.

Nevertheless the path was shown, and from that time communications with the western lands never entirely ceased, while there were sometimes migrations on an imposing scale. But the Chinese are rooted all their lives in the soil which saw their birth, and so deep is their concern for home that they are never truly happy in alien surroundings. Thus the process of colonization was slow, for those who went to trade or to make war always returned. Some could not, however; and as these exiles increased in number, so that where once was a camp there now rose the walls of a city, others of their countrymen, driven by overcrowding from the central provinces, found it easier to remain in Sinkiang, and in course of time the Chinese population increased.

In the wars of 1862–74 when the great Tso-Chung-tang led his forces across the deserts to quell the revolt of Yakub Beg, his troops came mostly from the provinces of Hunan and Hupei. Land was scarce in these provinces, and though most of the army returned there were some who settled in Sinkiang, so that for a while the province was spoken of as 'a colony of Hunanese'; but more important than the soldiery were the merchants who followed the advance. They were mostly those in Peking and Tientsin who found trading there



THE FOURTEEN RACES LIVING IN KULDJA, EACH SHOWN WITH ITS DISTINCTIVE HAT

unprofitable and sought to mend their fortunes by 'pursuing the western camp', as it was called. Traces of their journey are to be found all over Sinkiang, both in the north and the south. They had no money and no means of transporting heavy goods, so they relied on the sale of small household requisites—towels, linen cloths, brushes, and soap. These they sold as they travelled, the price increasing as they went farther to the west. So much were the articles they carried prized in the distant regions that these merchants always ended their journey as rich as when they started, and as the news of their success spread to the coast they were soon not lacking in imitators. Some sent for their relatives to join them, specifying in detail what goods they should bring; some established trading-posts and then returned to purchase new stocks. Little by little the channels of trade were fixed and deepened. Though still a desolate region, Sinkiang was no longer a myth. It was possible to meet men who had been there.

Let due praise be given to those who made the journey. They were content to work hard for small gains and to brave tremendous hardships, seeking not glory but only the means of earning an honest livelihood. What they endured has not been told in song or story, so let them now be honoured by these humble words of mine. Often they perished by the way, sometimes they were robbed and murdered, but the instinct to trade triumphed over every difficulty. Goods passed from hand to hand, bought or bartered; money flowed and increased; small plots of land were cultivated; prices were offered to herdsmen and to hunters for a steady supply of skins. These things are the foundations of civilization; without them the arts and sciences cannot exist. Let us praise the humble traders, who toil like the coral insect so that beauty they never dreamed of may come upon the face of the earth.

Once the traders had opened up the country, migration on a larger scale began. Kansu, Shensi, Shansi, and Szechuen were overcrowded, and the surplus population slowly flowed to the west. Then, during the time of the Republic, came the reign of Governor Yang at Urumchi, seventeen years of peace and plenty, during which period, by contrast with the woes of China, the western territory was known as the 'Earthly Paradise'—to make exact translation: 'the paradise of the outer world'.

War and famine increased the stream of emigrants, and as the exiles from each eastern province tended to herd together, the districts of the new world were named accordingly. There was the Tientsin division, for instance, the inhabitants of which all came from the single township of Yang-liu-ching, about eight miles to the south of Tientsin; and there were other districts named after Shensi, Shansi, Hupei, Hunan, and Kansu, to mention only a few.

All were industrious to begin with, but it was noticed that with increasing prosperity some of the exiles fell victims of the opium habit. Perhaps it was that they sought to dream of their native towns to which they would never return. Those from Shensi, Shansi, and Kansu were said to be most addicted to opium, and many of them allowed the vice to obtain so terrible a hold that they ceased to labour and were content to sink into poverty, having been forced to sell goods and land. Gradually the emigrants from Peking and Tientsin became the wealthy and influential classes in the new communities, for they were bound by an ascetic faith to touch no drug of any kind, even fermented liquors being forbidden to them. They were both industrious and honest, so that in time all local business centred round them, and they prospered much as the Quakers have prospered in Britain.

Chinese culture in Sinkiang centres round Tihwa, but in all the northern cities, Hami, Kucheng, Tacheng, and Kuldja, there are large populations of Chinese. To the southward the numbers decline, so that in many districts there are only a few score Chinese. If in my travels I came to a town where there was neither brewery nor pork butcher's shop, then I knew that there were few of my countrymen there. This was a rule which never failed.

My own computations have convinced me that the total Chinese population of Sinkiang does not now exceed a quarter of a million souls, that is, one-tenth of the total population. Nevertheless, the whole prosperity of the province depends upon them, for they are everywhere by virtue of their abilities accepted as the ruling class. In recent years massacre has lessened their numbers, but even in districts where they constituted a negligible minority all attempts to exterminate them have failed. It is as though they are necessary to the functioning of the community, for a few of them are always to be found.

Until 1912 the most powerful group of Chinese in Sinkiang were the emigrants from Hunan, to whom I have already referred; but from that time the Kansu group tended to increase most rapidly; while in 1933 the Japanese invasion of Northern China led to an influx of Manchurians, more than ten thousand in number.

They were a valuable addition to the population, and played an important part in determining the course of the wars, good physique and fighting quality being very marked among them. They are at present settled in Tihwa, Kuldja, and Tacheng. They came, as I have related, by way of Russia, and their relations with the Soviet authorities are excellent, for they are inspired by common detestation of Japan.

The Manchus

During the time of the Manchu Dynasty in Peking the troops sent to garrison the frontier were mostly Manchu in origin. Many of them did not return, and of those who settled permanently in Sinkiang some were completely absorbed by the Chinese population there, while others clung determinedly to their national customs and speech. Thus those at Kucheng, in number more than a thousand, have been assimilated to an astonishing degree; whereas there are ten thousand of them in Kuldja and Chuguchak (Tacheng), who are still called the New Manchu and the Old Manchu garrisons respectively and who still use their own language both in speech and in writing. From personal observation I can vouch for this, a special point of interest being the fact that while the Manchu language in China proper has become corrupt in the course of years, the Sinkiang garrisons have both speech and writing intact.

In Ili there are also the Hsi-po and So-lun garrisons, whose sad story I have already related. They were sent there by the Emperor Chien-lung to serve on the frontier, being promised by him that when they had completed ten years of service others should be sent to replace them. They were, in fact, three years on the journey, for they took their wives and other movable possessions with them, so that their rate of travel was slow. When the time came for their service to be ended the Emperor had forgotten all about them, so they were forced to stay on in the far land to which they had marched. They made the best of things, however, and now there are twenty

thousand of them living in Hwei-yuan and Ning-yuan, where they form a very active and promising community. They have learnt how to farm the lands distributed to them and are becoming known as skilled breeders of cattle. They still pay no taxes, a privilege which dates back to their garrison days. There are free schools for their children, and all their traditional customs are jealously maintained. I went among their settlements on the south bank of the Ili River and found that most of the young men could speak Russian, and had very modern ideas. During my brief time among them I formed a very high opinion of their character and abilities. It is certain that they will play an important, perhaps a decisive part, in the future of Sinkiang. Despite the retention of the Manchu language they are completely Chinese in sympathy, and in fundamental mode of life are definitely Chinese.

The Mongols

The Mongols are still nomads, nor have their customs changed in a thousand years. They are descendants of the Dzungarians, and move all the time in search of fresh pastures, governed by rainfall and change of season. Those known as the Chahars came from Kalgan. In spite of their constant movement they can be said to have settled in the north of Sinkiang, for the rhythm of their lives is regular, and though local changes may alter their migrations, broadly speaking their mode of life shows no change. In winter they seek a sheltered spot for their encampments; in summer, when the burning winds scorch the plains, they seek out the hill-side pastures. 'Winter Spot' and 'Summer Spot' are carefully chosen, and these considerations dominate their lives.

Their tents have the general shape of an inverted cauldron. The largest are perhaps one hundred feet in circumference, but thirty or forty feet is a more typical dimension. On the great plains the Mongol tent is a familiar sight, and so well is it adapted to natural conditions that experienced European travellers testify to its virtues, many preferring it to more modern equipment. It is constructed from felt, which is attached by ropes to a framework of stakes, about five feet high. On the sheltered side is the door; this is closed by a screen covered by a woollen fabric, which is also used to line ceiling and floor. There is no window except a square opening

in the top, which is left open in the daytime and closed at night.

Within the tent the side facing the door is known as 'the high side', for here the earth is raised. To the right is the altar of Buddha, placed in a recess, next to which is the place where guests may be seated. Farther to the right are the animals' quarters where cattle and lambs are kept. To the left is the bed of the master of the family, hidden from view by a screen; beyond this is the kitchen. All the processes of life are thus gathered together in one dwelling, humans and animals mingling. Only in the very wealthiest families is there any separation of cattle and men. If at an encampment you find separate tents for cows and sheep, for kitchen, and for womenfolk, you know at once that there is great prosperity.

The first duty of a woman on rising is to open the window; the next to pour water into the great jar for heating, after which it is poured into the washing-pot. When this is ready the dwellers in the tents are roused and in turn pour the hot water over their heads. They use no basin, for they consider it sinful and dangerous to let the same water touch their body twice, in which they resemble Mohammedans.

By the time that this ceremony of ablution is completed the women have made tea. A cup is first served to the Buddha, after which all partake freely; the tea is prepared with salt and milk, while the bread is a sort of pastry mixed with sour milk, and very pleasant to the taste once you are used to it.

Following this light meal all start to work, the father of the family allotting to each his task. The midday meal is little different, and after a short rest work is resumed till twilight, at which hour the cattle are driven in from the pasture for the women to milk them. The evening meal is an excellent noodle soup. When it is eaten all sit round the fire, but no candles are ever lighted, and as soon as the embers cease to glow the family retire for the night.

Beef and mutton are added to the diet at such seasons as they are plentiful, but the herds are very carefully husbanded and no animal is killed unless it can be replaced. A good supply of milk is of the utmost importance, and it is worked up into many forms. There are cream cakes, cream wafers (thin sheets of biscuit), butter, and a 'cream wine'. All these are very good indeed, being exceptionally nutritious.

It is considered very important to keep the hands clean, so they are wiped on the clothes. The dirtier their greasy robes become the prouder they are, for the stains on their chests denote prosperity, that is, much eating. Their clothing is mostly dark in colour, the men wearing a long woollen gown and a short leather jacket. The women often wear long gowns made of cotton fabric, the trains of which sweep the floor. In winter the men wear bare sheepskin robes and fur wind-hoods. It is an excellent dress for cold weather on the plains and is imitated by many Chinese.

The only touch of colour in the costume is the red button on top of the woollen cap; but ornaments of gold and silver are worn, mostly in the form of ear-rings or wrist-rings. Pearl and coral are much prized, and gold rings are worn on the fingers to indicate wealth.

They are a healthy people on the whole, but smallpox is frequent among them. A child who has survived this illness is called a 'ripe man'; one who has not yet had it is called 'raw'. Only a 'ripe man' can be recommended for marriage, I was told, which gives some idea of the extent to which smallpox is common. They understand very little of any medical arts, and it is to their priest that they turn in case of illness. If a reading from the Buddhist scriptures does not improve the patient's condition certain drugs are administered, and if these fail the ear of the sick man is pierced by a gold wire on which is hung a piece of coral. They have great faith in this specific, and it is a saying among them that the child with a coral ear-ring is much blessed.

Marriage is arranged by 'brokers', who suggest likely matches to both parties and arrange the financial aspects of the affair. As soon as the contract is made the family of the bridegroom present *hata*, mutton, and wine as a betrothal gift. *Hata* is either a piece of cloth or of silk according to the wealth of the parties; a piece of silk embossed with an image of Buddha is considered the most noble of offerings. Now the 'broker' takes the bridegroom to the house of his bride and a second piece of *hata* is presented, a piece of gum being placed within the roll. This signifies that the marriage will be as binding as though stuck with gum.

Further gifts are now made to the bride's family, but these are distributed by them among their relatives and friends to

indicate that their daughter's betrothal has been satisfactorily accomplished.

On the wedding day the bride has a red cap and a red gown, her face being hidden by a veil of thin cloth. The lamas bless the happy couple, who kneel to receive the blessing; and before he leads away his bride, the bridegroom must also kneel in token of respect to the elders of her family. Now she is set upon a horse and led to her husband's tents, musicians walking before her and all the onlookers giving cries of joy. At the gateway to the bridegroom's pasture a passage from the Buddhist scriptures is read by a lama and the couple kneel once more, making obeisance to earth and to heaven, and then to the altar of Buddha within the dwelling. When the bride and bridegroom are seated upon the bed a sister-in-law of the house unbinds their hair and plaits the strands together, which signifies the closeness of the union.

After doing reverence to the Buddha the bride must kneel to the kitchen god, and she is then taken by her sister-in-law to change into the dress of a married woman. Her hair is now braided in two plaits which hang down upon her breasts. Once more she must salute the kitchen god, and then she is led back to her chamber, where from behind a screen she accepts the gifts of the wedding guests, usually pieces of red cloth and sweetmeats or some other delicacy.

The whole company now gather for the feast, consuming much wine and tea. Those who are eloquent speak words of blessing, and then the guests sing and dance.

For three days after the wedding all the duties of the bride are performed by her sister-in-law, but after this period she becomes a member of the household and enters upon her daily tasks. Monogamy is strictly observed among the Mongols, and no man is allowed to take a second wife while the first is still in his house. It is considered disgraceful for a man not to be married, and if he and his intended bride are too poor to wed, the elders of the community will give what assistance is needed to make the wedding possible.

Death is followed by fire burial. When a rich man dies his body is washed and wrapped in white clothes. Then it is borne to some high place, and there in the presence of a lama is committed to the flames. While it burns the priest pronounces a blessing, and the family crowd round to observe how

complete is the burning. If all the bones are burned away this is accepted as a sign that the dead man was not guilty of any secret offence and that his body has been received into heaven. The bone ash is mingled with incense and clean earth, and from this is made a figure of the dead man, which is buried at a spot chosen by the lama. A pagoda is always built over the grave.

When a poor man dies these rites are not possible. The corpse is set upon the back of a horse and a company of friends and relatives ride with it far into the desert. It is now laid upon a heap of stones and a small fire is kindled beside it, after which all ride rapidly away, never casting a glance behind them. After three days the place is again visited, and if the body has been completely devoured by wild beasts the friends of the dead man rejoice, knowing him to have been pure of heart. If the corpse is found still unconsumed there is great distress, and the lamas are called upon to make intercession for one so stained by sin that even the wild beasts reject his flesh. The priests call upon the beasts and birds of the desert to do their work quickly, crying out that the dead man is less sinful than they think him. Eventually the flesh is consumed and all are at peace. This ceremony is known as 'heaven-burial', for the birds are considered to be the servants of heaven. The tent of the dead man is always considered unlucky by those who knew him. They move elsewhere, and none would willingly return to the place. In return for their services the lamas are rewarded by the goods of the dead man being shared among them. Thus in course of time all lamas become very rich.

A son mourns one hundred days for his parents, and a wife the same length of time for her husband. For others the period is forty-nine days, during which there must be no feasting, no wearing of bright colours, and no dressing of the hair.

On the anniversary of a parent's death the son burns an oil-lamp in front of the Buddha; incense is burned and friends are invited to partake of wine. If there is a pagoda the sons and grandsons invite lamas to perform their ceremonies there; but if there has been 'heaven-burial' the service is held in the son's tent, and while the scripture is read he cries towards the sky. There is no compulsion for a widow to remarry, but she often does so. Inheritance is simple, and if there is no son a

nephew or any male of near kinship is adopted by the family, but no one of another blood is ever accepted.

Hospitality is princely on the great plains. No sooner is the sound of hoof-beats heard than the head of the family hurries from the tent to greet the traveller. He takes the rein of the horse, while the other members of the household line up in sign of welcome, the women to the east, the men to the west. The screen door is now raised and the guest is invited to enter and sit beside the altar. Tea with milk and salt is now offered to him, followed by sour-milk cakes. If the guest is to spend the night orders are given that a sheep shall be brought to the tent for slaughter. It is always shown to the guest before being killed, as proof that good meat is to be given to him and that the animal is young. Wine is drunk at the meal, and any stranger can be sure of unfailing courtesy even though the visit may last several days. In fact, if the weather is bad the traveller will be pressed to stay, for ill fortune must fall upon any man who allows a guest to depart in a storm.

A noble guest will be received with every honour, and all the neighbours will be invited to greet him and sit at meat. But if the traveller is a young man it is he who must show respect to his host, and this he does by making a circuit of the tent before entering and laying aside his whip before he passes through the door. If he is a relative some small gift will be expected from him. A son-in-law will usually bring a cooked sheep's head when he pays a call.

Before the company sit down to eat, the head and tail of the sheep are presented to the Buddha. This ceremony is never omitted, for to do so would be to court disaster. Though the life of the Mongol is not much hindered by ceremonial, those ceremonies which are prescribed by the lamas are observed with every reverence, and there is a very genuine religious feeling shown in the prayers.

It is the ambition of every family to have a son in the priesthood, but much formality and expense are involved in the ritual. On the death of his parents an only son who has become a lama is permitted to lay aside his priestly rank, for it is considered that it is important that he shall marry and continue his father's name. But though the continuation of a family is considered of great importance, the Mongols never preserve a family tree, and though their memories extend back

to the great-grandfather no one ever thinks of going back any further save in the case of great leaders. There is no term in the language for any more remote ancestor than that.

In the spring of every year great festivals are held, the community assembling round the Opul, a conical mound of stones shaped like a pagoda, three or four feet high. When the ceremonies are concluded the young men compete in horse-races, for which big prizes are awarded. At other seasons the Buddha is carried in procession among the tents, and all kneel to present their gifts. On these days no food must be taken, and only tea passes the lips of young and old. Nor must any animal be killed, a prohibition which extends to the least insect or worm. The fury of heaven will be visited upon any who breaks this law.

The Mongols are good friends and bad enemies. They will steal from any man who is not their guest. Wine makes them violent and in their quarrels a deathblow is often struck, but they are not ill disposed to strangers, and I moved freely among them, receiving courtesy on every side. The fact that I rode with them contributed to their respect, for they often spoke contemptuously of those who travelled only in 'horseless carts'. As to their future, it is difficult to make any prediction. While they are not unintelligent and show excellent sense in the management of their own affairs, they have no use for any progress, their simple customs having remained unaltered for many hundred years. They are not hostile to progress but are completely unmoved by it. They preferred to die rather than to submit to the first reforms which the Soviets sought to thrust upon them. Since then more gentle and understanding treatment may have produced more effect—it is difficult to know, for the territory in which they mostly move is now strictly barred to travellers. For my part I do not think that they are easily civilizable, nor do I think that the attempt is worth while. Pasture is plentiful, and the nomad may play a useful part in the economy of Central Asia, for he has knowledge and skill which the scientific agriculturist does not always possess.

The Tungans

The Tungans of Sinkiang come mostly from Kansu, though some are from the province of Shensi. Their style of dress is

Chinese, and in China they are known as Kansu Mohammedans. The name Tungan is used chiefly by the European travellers and by the Mohammedan 'Uighurs' in Sinkiang.

The earliest migration of Mohammedans into China took place during the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618–905). They came from Persia, some by the overland route, others by sea to Canton, a city still notable for the number of its mosques. Their faith is known as 'Islam', which means submission, and their common salutation 'Salaam', meaning peace—hardly, in view of their history, a very suitable word. The Chinese speak of it as *hwei*, because it was first largely practised in the region Hsi-yu, known also as Hwei-ho.

There are no very great differences between the manner of life of Tungans and Chinese, save that the Mohammedan will not touch pork, and is forbidden by religious law to use either tobacco or wine. The Tungans read the Koran in Arabic and always, as a matter of courtesy, refer to the Buddhist faith as 'The Great Religion', while their own they speak of as 'the smaller'. They are chiefly centred round Kucheng, Urumchi, Sui-lai, Kuldja, Hami, and Turfan, but there are many other groups to the southward. I estimate their total number to lie between three and four hundred thousand, but it is difficult to be sure. The recent wars must have led to a considerable decrease in their number, for they were greatly concerned in all the fighting, having a very warlike character. Those who dwell in Urumchi are divided in twenty-four *fangs*, each with its own mosque. These correspond roughly to the district from which their members originally came—thus they speak of the Hsi-ning Fang, the Shensi Fang, and so forth. Most of them are merchants or farmers, and as a whole they are prosperous and industrious folk. They rise with the sun and retire at the hour of its setting; they live a frugal, ascetic life, and it is a confirmed racial characteristic to save money. Complete financial independence is their idea of honour; to beg, the deepest shame. No matter how poor, they always have some small fund in reserve for an emergency; and it is a tribute to their well-regulated lives that they live to a great age. Conservatism and isolation are traditional among them, and they hold aloof from their fellow men.

A boy is considered a man at twelve; a girl a woman at nine. Careful instruction is given to the young in the teachings of

the Koran and the various ceremonies which the Prophet enjoined. Marriage is entirely controlled by the parents—who give testimony of the union by themselves grasping hands. The procedure when the time of the wedding arrives is for the bridegroom to ride on horseback to claim his bride. Divorce is frowned on by them, and may not, as is the case with some tribes, be granted without good reason. An Ahun will inquire into the truth of the husband's complaint, and his decision is final.

When death comes, the corpse is laid out fully dressed and covered by a white sheet. A 'bath-pond' is then prepared near by and an expert 'washer of the dead' comes at cockcrow to begin the ritual. He first washes his hands and then disrobes the body before placing it in the pool. Another white cloth is draped about the lower limbs during the process, and incense is burned while water and sweet oils are applied to the flesh of the corpse. Re-clad in clean undergarments, the body is now swathed in white bandages. Burial takes place within three days, no coffin being used. Mourners and attendants wear white.

The Tungans are meticulous in observing the least detail of the ritual which the priests prescribe, but disputes concerning it are frequent, as is always the case with over-zealous believers. Thus they tend to split up into sects, which leads to endless strife.

During my stay in Sinkiang there were at least four powerful groups of Tungans, of which the strongest was controlled by Ma Tuan-chang. During the last years of the nineteenth century a great leader named Ma Shan-jen founded a sect who followed what was known as 'the new creed'. They were most powerful in the districts around Karashar, and still have great influence in Sinkiang, where disputes between the old and the new creeds often lead to serious fighting.

While it is impossible not to respect the Tungans for their notable virtues, it cannot be denied that their religious intolerance is a source of continual trouble in Sinkiang; nor does there seem the slightest prospect of their settling down, for they are not easily reached by the forces of progress, and despite their trading interests, remain a race apart.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE FOURTEEN RACES OF SINKIANG (2)

Moslems (often called Uighurs or Chan-t'ou); Kasaks; Kirghiz; Tadjiks; Tartars, White Russians.

The Moslems

THE MOSLEMS are the original inhabitants of Sinkiang and constitute at least seven-tenths of the population. Because of their white head-dress they are known as Chan-t'ou, or 'Turban-heads' by the Chinese; but the custom is rapidly dying out in the cities, and now it is mostly the Ahuns who wear the turbans. Sometimes they are referred to as Turkis or Uighurs, this last the name of the Turkish race which ruled in Central Asia before the rise of the Mongols; and of late the Sinkiang Government has enacted that in official documents they shall be called not Chan-t'ou but Wei-wu-erh, which is a Chinese translation of Uighur. During the vast expansion of Islam which followed the death of the Prophet the Turkis defeated Persia and crossed the Pamirs, driving out Buddhism and establishing their creed in the valleys south of the Tien Shan.

In appearance the Moslems resemble the European type, with prominent nose, high bridged, and with dark, deep-set eyes. Most of them still live to the south of the Tien Shan range, but there are large colonies in most of the northern cities. Their houses are like those of their Chinese neighbours, save that the roof does not project and has a slight slant. This is hardly noticeable, and does not prevent the owner from walking upon the roof to take the air.

Not only goods are stored upon the roof-tops. It is quite a common sight to see cocks and hens strolling among the piles of melons and the stacks of fuel, while dogs often stroll out on to the roof to bark at passers-by.

The dwelling-room of the house has usually only one door, which faces north. A 'sky-window' is opened in the ceiling for ventilation. The stove is dug into the wall and there is a chimney which projects high above the roof. The walls are

very thick and are hollowed out on all sides for purposes of storage. Furniture there is little, save for a small table on which dinner is served; but the floor is strewn with rugs, often of great value, on which people sit and sleep.

The ceilings are always decorated, often in very striking fashion, with paintings and carvings; and on the walls where storage permits, are beautiful pictures of famous figures from the passes, interspersed with flowers and birds. The beauty of these decorations affords a measure of the wealth of the household.

The rich man will usually have a separate house for the reception of his guests, and both this and his own dwelling are situated in well-planted gardens to which running water is plentifully supplied. During the hot months few retreats are more beautiful than such gardens as these, and wherever the Moslem has gone he has taken his love of trees. In Moslem towns the streets are often lined with tall poplars, in which there nest innumerable crows.

The men wear long overcoats with a cotton band around their middles. Their hats are very small, mostly of velvet, beautifully embroidered. They are worn on the back of the head all the year round. The women dress in a style closely resembling the European, with brightly coloured petticoats worn knee-length. The favourite hues are red and green, and for further adornment feathers are much in demand, in addition to ornate ear-rings and costly bracelets. The women are said to be very, very beautiful, but as they remain veiled to extreme old age this point is difficult to verify. Both men and women wear high boots which come right up to the knee, and in bad weather an outer pair of goloshes are worn, which are taken off before entering a room.

Their diet is based upon wheat, millet, and rice. Often the very poor among them cannot afford meat and so live upon wheat-cake and water; but the well-to-do fare off a marvellous rice dish, in which mutton is minced with egg, flavoured with salt, pepper, and oils, and garnished with onions, raisins, and carrots. This is served on a huge flat dish from which it is eaten by hand. It is the *pièce de résistance* of Moslem cookery and is served only to the most favoured of distinguished guests.

Beef and mutton are usually roasted; it is only rarely that the meat is boiled, nor do they often fry. Butter is a frequent

ingredient in their dishes, and so are certain vegetable oils; but they cannot endure the least trace of lard, and if by mischance any is included in their fare (which happens sometimes when they travel) they immediately vomit. Also prohibited by their faith are the flesh of tiger, eagle, pig, dog, serpent, and crab. These animals are specifically mentioned in the Koran as being of evil character; further prohibitions extend to fermented liquor and tobacco, and there are special warnings against eating anything which is not perfectly fresh.

The first important ceremony in the life of a young Moslem comes at the age of four or five years, when the whole family assemble to celebrate the circumcision.

Marriage usually takes place before the eighteenth birthday, and the ceremonies do not differ from those in use throughout the Moslem world. The veiled bride mounted on horseback, the musicians, the scripture readings, and the feastings, are all very picturesque to witness.

No union is permitted between those reared on the same milk, but close lateral relationship is not in itself an obstacle. Divorce is permissible without great formality, each of the parties returning to the parents. If there are children the father takes the sons and the mother the daughters. When the separation has been the result of a foolish quarrel every effort is made by the families concerned to arrange a reunion, and re-marriage is not permitted for six months in order that there may be time for a reconciliation—but after three divorces the same couple cannot be joined together again until either one or the other has had intercourse with some one else. This is to discourage undue fickleness by publicly shaming those who display it.

A child born within one year of a divorce must be acknowledged by the husband, and this is enforced even when there are obvious grounds for believing that it is not his child. This is a curious provision and seems to be based on faulty observation of the period of foetal development at the time when the law was laid down. So conservative are followers of Islam that even when modern knowledge revealed the discrepancy there was no thought of amending the law in accordance with observed fact.

Polygamy is practised by all Moslems who can afford it, and appears in practice to work very well. It is forbidden to

take more than four wives, but ways are found to evade the prohibition, and it is not uncommon to find a rich man enjoying the pleasures of the seraglio.

The burial rites of the Moslems are very elaborate, and in the case of a wealthy family cost a great deal. No delay is permitted, however, and the ceremony is usually completed within twenty-four hours after death. While the priests read from the Koran the body is wrapped in white cloths and placed in a coffin of sweet-smelling wood, over which there is placed a beautifully embroidered cover. For burial a great cave some ten feet deep is prepared and the corpse is slid out from the coffin to be slowly lowered into the earth, the hole being immediately filled with sand and clay. If the corpse fall face upwards the family are congratulated on the holiness of the deceased; if face downwards, they are pitied; if the corpse falls on the edge of the grave it is thought that the death is untimely and thus the spirit will not find rest. Every year at spring and autumn the grave is visited and made trim, for to neglect the burial-place of your parents is a grievous sin.

If there is a son then the property goes to him; and if there is no son a daughter may inherit; but the law also provides that a son or daughter by a previous marriage may claim a share.

Needless to say, polygamy offers every chance for legal complications concerning inheritance, and were it not that the decisions of the Ahuns are obeyed without question there would be endless litigation in every family.

A further complexity of Moslem life is afforded by the system of naming. There are no surnames as we understand them, and senior relatives are all spoken of as elder brothers, while nephews and sons-in-law are called younger brothers; relatives more distant than the first degree are called by their names. Thus on becoming acquainted with a Moslem family the stranger has great difficulty in ascertaining the exact relationships, and I myself have often remained under a misapprehension for a long while.

They worship the one true God, and Mahomet as his messenger; and though it is not always easy to understand the doctrines laid down in the Koran, in effect they are well suited to Eastern life, and work in practice much better than in theory. Their year has twelve months, their week seven days; 'mosque

day' is on Friday, and is very strictly observed in Sinkiang. Five prayers are prescribed for each day, that before sunrise being deemed the most important; but it is a mistake to think that these devotions are a formal mumbling of set words. No less than seven stages are set out for the worshipper. First, mental preparation; then, the raising of the hands; next, the rising to the feet; then, the reading of the Koran; next, bowing, sixthly, the deep obeisance; seventh, the retiring from prayer.

This ritual should be performed by all, irrespective of age or sex. Not all believers keep all five occasions of prayer, but they are far more devout than the average churchgoer of the West. Their fasts are certainly observed with great strictness. For one whole month in every twelve no food may pass their lips during the daytime. Only in cases of extreme urgency may the fast be broken, in which event compensation is exacted by the Ahun, day for day. If the fast is broken without cause the penalty is to fast for two further months, and this is strictly enforced.

When the fast is ended all put on their finest clothes and for seven days a feast is observed. Seventy days later comes the 'day of butchery', on which solemn acts of worship mark the close of the year.

It is the wish of every good Moslem once in his lifetime to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The journey from Turkistan entails great hardship and many tales are told of those who have perished of thirst in the deserts. None mourn for them, however, since to die thus is considered a supreme honour. 'It chanced that on the journey Allah was graciously pleased to summon my father to his presence', a son told me, speaking of his father's death. Those who return are honoured by the name '*hadji*', and all show them great respect. They are considered to have been drawn close to God and to have gained great wisdom. Their advice is sought, and disputes are often settled by their word alone. Many sell all their possessions in order to make the pilgrimage; others, through the neglect of their business during their absence, become bankrupt on their return; but every year sees the caravans set out for Mecca, and the simple Moslems journey forth gladly to make their peace with God.

Their manners are dignified, and in their daily life there is no excessive ceremony, though simple forms of politeness are

observed. A young man meeting his elder will cross his hands upon his chest, and then, muttering 'Salaam', the greeting of good wishes, stroke the beard with the hand. Women touch cheek with cheek as a greeting, and elders embrace their children, kissing them tenderly in European style.

Like all the other inhabitants of Sinkiang, their way of doing honour to a guest is to slaughter an animal for his pleasure. Their cooking is excellent, and so is the diversity of dishes to be seen upon their tables. Melons, fruits, raisins, preserved meats, are placed before the guest, who is free to take what he pleases. To refrain from so doing is not polite, for hospitality is best repaid by enjoyment. At their feasts there is always music, and those who do not join in the singing always beat time with their hands. In spite of the Koran's prohibition wine is sometimes drunk at these feasts. It is made mostly from barley, but dates and grapes are sometimes used in the fermentation, the liquor resulting being very strong. Owing to their normal habits of abstinence they are not very good drinkers, and after the feasts there is usually a period of penitence. When they dance it is in couples, somewhat in the style of Europe. I have taken great delight in these simple pleasures, finding the Moslems good company, although prone to religious fury under the influence of a priesthood sadly inclined towards fanaticism.

Their language is Arabic in origin and goes from right to left, the symbols being said to resemble tadpoles. Although I had no means of making any very accurate observation I was often surprised to notice how many of them can read and write. Those who can copy only are called Mora, but the fully literate take the title of Ahun. In the hundred and fourteen chapters of the Koran they find instruction in every question of conduct. This sacred book is the unalterable code of their life. By it Moslems everywhere are bound together. For the most part its language is direct and clear, but unfortunately there are certain obscurities concerning the interpretation of which the bitterest quarrels may arise.

The good qualities of the Moslems are many. Honesty is their pride, and they rarely break their word. They are law-abiding by nature and bear misfortune submissively. Drunkenness disgusts them, and to lend money at high interest is

IN THE HOUSE OF A RICH MOSLEM MERCHANT AT KULDJA

considered disgraceful. When they swear an oath they lay their hand on the Koran, or if the sacred book is not available, stamp on cooked rice. This signifies that they will be crushed even as the rice is crushed if they break faith when once they have sworn.

But with their good qualities are to be found the bad. They are for the most part timid, pleasure-loving and indolent, and they cannot be relied on in an emergency. They are content to sit in the sun after eating, and they will believe that all is for the best until events prove the contrary, upon which they will fly to the other extreme and proclaim that all is lost. On the whole they live on good terms with the Chinese, but they rarely master the Chinese language, and as this is usually the instrument of government, decrees and regulations have to be interpreted. Those who are charged with this duty are not always honest, and it is recorded that Governor Yang was forced to institute drastic penalties for interpreters who tampered with truth in order to exact money from the Moslem population. If the language difficulty could be successfully overcome, I am hopeful that the Moslems would be far more contented, and since they are more than two-thirds of the total population, this would make for the happiness and prosperity of Sinkiang.

The Kasaks

The Kasaks are a people with dark skins and a Mongol cast of features. They are said to be descendants of the Kang-chu tribe which migrated westwards about the time of the Han Dynasty. They are Mohammedans, but they are by no means strict in their religious observances, being wild and utterly undisciplined nomads, without any fixed abode. They are contemptuous of cities and usually cause trouble when they visit the fairs. Their life is governed by a continual search for fresh pastures. In Chinese history the lands they inhabit were always referred to as 'moving country'. Their constant shifting of grazing grounds has led to various difficulties in frontier demarcation between China and Russia, and there are still certain questions outstanding at the present time.

They are great meat-eaters, being very fond of roasted flesh in any form. Horse-meat sausage, the making of which I have described already, is their chief delicacy. They drink tea with

milk, and fermented mare's milk serves them for wine. They dress themselves mostly in black cloth coats, with bushy fur hats which they wear all the year round. To their leather girdles a dagger is attached on the right side and a leather bag on the left. The women wear long gowns which trail upon the ground, and for ornament have rings and costly bracelets, often of gold studded with precious stones.

As soon as their children have been circumcised they are taught to ride. This is at five years old, and by the time they are ten the boys are all first-class riders, capable of performing astonishing tricks in the saddle. They do not shave on reaching manhood, but trim the beard along their lips for convenience in eating.

Marriage is strictly forbidden to those raised from the same milk, but otherwise there is considerable freedom of choice. A marriage broker or 'go-between' arranges the financial aspects of the affair and finally brings the two parents together. Once they have clasped hands there is no going back on the bargain. The bridegroom comes in person to fetch his bride, but there is an interesting detail concerning which anthropologists have advanced several theories. It is the custom that a father shall not meet his daughter-in-law until two or three years after the ceremony. Should they meet by accident the girl must turn her back and cover her face with her handkerchief.

A man is allowed to marry four wives, but it is always understood that the first will have full control of the management of the home, the others being in the position of servants, though they are treated well. Divorce is considered disgraceful, but if it appears unavoidable the relatives of both parties meet and discuss with astonishing impartiality as to who is in the wrong. A husband may not divorce his wife without paying her a sum of money in proportion to his wealth. If the woman asks for a divorce she will receive nothing, even though she is judged to have been justified in her complaints. It is a fixed rule that no matter what the circumstances of the divorce may be, all the children must remain with the father, the mother losing all her rights.

After a man's death his widow is not free to remarry as she chooses, for her husband's family paid good money for her and she is theirs by right of purchase. Therefore she is

usually married either to her husband's brother or to a cousin. This practice is not in accord with the principles laid down in the Koran, but the most that Islam has been able to achieve in this matter is to prevent compulsion from being applied to the widow, who may remain single if she desires, being then without any obligation to her husband's relatives.

Sickness is treated by reading of appropriate scriptures on the part of the priest. Death is accepted with complete resignation, and there are no ceremonies save a general mourning. It is their custom to bury the dead immediately, for the spirit of the dead man may exercise an evil influence while his body is above ground.

The corpse is washed in clean water and wrapped in a white cloth, after which it is laid out with the head pointing to the south and the face towards the west. A tomb is then hastily hollowed and the body is committed to the earth, a passage from the Koran being solemnly read. The ritual is quickly ended; it is well suited to a people whose life is hard and who are always on the move.

When the dead man is laid in the grave it is the custom for his widow to tear at her face with her nails, scratching till she draws blood. This shows her respect and love for her husband, and signifies her wish that no other man shall ever enjoy her beauty. However, it is amazing how quickly the scars heal, and it is usually not long before she is married once again. In spite of this fact the ceremony is never omitted, for any woman failing to scar her beauty would be jeered at by all the community, and condemned as incapable of true affection.

I had a great liking for the Kasaks. For all their wildness they are simple and lovable folk, though often driven to dishonesty under pressure of great want, and very hospitable and courteous to the traveller who arrives in their midst. The elders kiss their children on meeting them, while those of the same age shake hands and then embrace each other round the waist. They are bearded, but do not stroke their beards as a sign of greeting as the Moslems do. Like other nomads they parade the beast chosen for slaughter so that their guest may see that he is being given the best they have. White horse is considered a specially delicate dish, while sheep are most esteemed which have a yellow head and white body.

Before every meal the Kasak is careful to wash his hands,

and it is a fixed custom with them to wear a hat when eating. Failure to do so is considered discourteous, and if one of the tribesmen is offered food when he has no hat handy he will always do his best to improvise some head covering before eating. I have even seen one of them place a small piece of straw in his hair as an act of courtesy before partaking of food.

They eat with their hands, but first cut the meat with their knives. When a stranger comes to their tent he must at once be offered food, and if no fresh-cut meat is to be had the host must explain to his guest the reasons for failing to provide it. Otherwise the guest has the right to complain to the head-man of the community, who will reprimand the host severely, and even inflict punishment upon him for having disgraced the encampment in failing to deal generously with a traveller.

They are very cleanly in their habits, and every morning immediately on rising take up the water-pot to perform their ablutions, being particularly careful to wash the secret parts of their bodies. They have no mosques, being completely nomadic in their way of life. Worship is a simple matter to them, involving little more than a prayer spoken facing the west. However, they never fail in the prescribed customs, and if they can find no water cleanse themselves with clean earth.

They keep the Mohammedan fasts with fair strictness, but are more enthusiastic in performance of the feasts. I have already described the amazing horse-races with which these occasions are ended. The prize is usually a sheep, which the winning youngster proudly shares with his family and friends.

They live very much in the present, caring so little for the past that there is no word in their language for great-grandfather. Justice is administered by a meeting of the whole community, which appears to gather without any special summons as soon as the whisper goes round that some wrong has been done. Minor offences are punishable by fines and sometimes the offender's cattle are confiscated by the order of the head-man. The death penalty is only exacted for murder by stealth, and following upon it the property of the executed man is shared among the community. For the most part the Kasaks are peaceable and honest, but sometimes the young men feel it necessary to prove their manhood, for which purpose they will plunder far and wide, slaying any who

resist them. Such outbreaks are a serious nuisance in the north of Sinkiang.

When towards the end of the last century certain lands were ceded to Russia, great confusion was caused by the refusal of the Kasaks to understand the meaning of the changes in frontier. They moved to and fro as before, and carried on their barter as usual across the borders.

In later times the Soviets inflicted great hardships upon them, sending troops to round up and seize their cattle, and though this policy has since been modified there is still a steady drift to the south on the part of the nomad population. As a result the grazing lands around Tacheng and Kuldja are overcrowded and even the cities are feeling the pressure of over-population. Several times attempts have been made to drive back unwanted immigrants, but the distances involved are so great that the task is hopeless, and so the drift goes on.

The Kirghiz

The Kirghiz, known in Chinese as Hei-hei-tzu, have their head-quarters in Kashgar and are scattered throughout the neighbouring districts. They have already figured in my narrative, and from those somewhat sanguinary and unsavoury episodes some idea of their general characteristics has doubtless emerged. They are born plunderers, good fighters, bad neighbours, and a thorn in the side of authority wherever they are to be found.

Their first migration to the west must have occurred during the time of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), for they are undoubtedly of Mongol stock. They are nomadic in their habits, though here and there they have turned to agriculture and are half-heartedly raising crops.

Their language resembles that of the Kasaks, but has no affinities whatever with that of the Uighurs. They do not follow Buddhism, known to them as 'the Yellow religion', but neither are they devout Mohammedans, though their customs are allied to those of Islam.

The tribes are divided into two divisions, the Kirghiz of the west and of the east, the range of the Tien Shan marking the boundary between the wanderings of the two sections. In the old days those to the east were driven out by the Dzungarians. Chien Lung of the Manchu Dynasty checking

them, confirmed the right of the Kirghiz to the lands they had occupied and placed them under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Kashgar.

They objected, however, to the payment of taxes, and when these were forcibly exacted, rebelled under the leadership of two chieftains, Changar and Yusu. They were never completely subdued, and after years of trouble took advantage of the Yakub Beg rebellion to throw off the sovereignty of the Emperor Tung-chi and proclaim themselves subjects of Russia.

A good many of them still remained on indisputably Chinese territory, however, and in the long wrangles which now took place concerning the demarcation of the frontier the exact status of the Kirghiz remained somewhat vague. They were often claimed by both Russia and China, while they successfully avoided the domination of either power. Even at the present time they still sit on the fence, and though Russian influence over them is increasing they are now tending to drift towards China. Probably their movements are just an instinctive avoidance of any irksome authority and are devoid of political significance; but be that as it may, they have caused a good many diplomatic headaches in the past and may cause still more in the future.

Their tents are like those of the Kasaks and Mongols, but their mode of dress is Moslem. The men wear long gowns and do not wear the same hats winter and summer. The head-dress of their womenfolk is particularly graceful, being tastefully folded and having a white cloth one foot in length swinging down behind. The women veil their faces with white cloth or lace of their own weaving, and are particularly handsome, having a splendid carriage.

A guest at one of their encampments is always offered sour milk. They are mostly very poor, and it is only the very rich among them who can afford mare's milk and rice. The poorer tribesmen and their families have to subsist on noodle soup. Yet despite their poverty they are very hospitable, and though they are always eager for plunder they would think it the depth of shame to steal from a guest.

Their bearing is frank and manly, and save during their outbursts of lawlessness they are quite law-abiding, their fear of officials being almost laughable at times. They show a great ingenuity in avoiding taxation, which is not to be

wondered at, since they are so impoverished. The lands which they inhabit are not very fertile, and during a large part of the year they depend for their water upon snow from the hills. One of the principal duties of the Mora (as their priests are called) is to pray for snow. Another duty is to cast out sickness, and this the Mora does by ordering that a sheep shall be killed and placed before the afflicted man. Then there is dancing and beating upon drums, by which means they believe they can drive out the devils from the man and cause them to enter the carcass of the sheep. When this is taken away it is thought that the devils go with it, and so complete is their faith in this method of cure that the sick man will more often than not be revived.

Their marriage customs are very similar to those of the Moslems, but the bride on entering her new home must share with her husband a wheat-cake soaked in salt water. This rite is said to ensure fertility and to make it likely that the children will be male.

A man may take several wives, but all enjoy equal rights and are of the same social standing. I was told that it was very unusual for a woman to marry a second time. Domestic quarrels are always dealt with by the Ahun, who will enter the tent and read the Koran to the disputing couple. The same rule applies to widows as among the Kasaks—they must not remarry out of the husband's family. This principle is firmly established despite the fact that it is frowned upon by all strict followers of Islam.

They pay great respect to their dead, and the annual ceremony of visiting the graves is an occasion for much feasting. Friends and relatives bring gifts, and in return are feasted, the whole proceedings ending with horse-races or shooting competitions. No pork is consumed, and wine is never drunk even at the feasts, but save in these two respects they pay little heed to the details of the Moslem code.

There can be no denying the fact that the Kirghiz still present an awkward problem to the Government of Sinkiang. Perhaps the best solution would be to allow them as much freedom as possible, so as gradually to win their confidence and overcome their distrust of all official rule. But their thieving propensities make it quite impossible to ignore them, and since they have the knack of moving swiftly from place to

place amid the foothills of Tien Shan, expeditions to punish them for their occasional raids upon the Moslem villages meet with great difficulties and do not usually achieve their object. One good thing the Kirghiz have done, however—during the brief period when, under the leadership of Usman, they controlled Kashgar, they convinced the Moslems that the Chinese administration, with all its faults, was paradise compared with the régime which succeeded it.

The Tadjiks

The Tadjiks, who are of Turkish origin, inhabit the region of Pu-li (Sarigol), a mountainous district nowhere less than 10,000 feet above sea-level. References to them are found in Chinese history as early as the time of the Han Dynasty, when they are written of as 'the eight tribes of the Karakorum', but they were not brought under the control of China until the time of Ghenghis Khan, that is, in the Yuan Dynasty round about A.D. 1300. After the great westward spread of the empire had ceased and the tide of invasion had receded, the Tadjiks regained their independence; but they caused no trouble and dwelt in perfect harmony with China, controlling the trade-route to India, which had been an important highway of commerce ever since the time of the Tang Dynasty. Throughout the Ming Dynasty (1368–1643) they were regarded as allies and good neighbours, and though since that time they have been involved in the general unrest of the frontier district they are not to be considered as hostile elements like the Kirghiz, whom in their ways of living they resemble. They have lost their ancient power and are now confined to the district of Pu-li, but they still practise a form of Mohammedanism, and though most of them remain nomads there are signs that cultivation is increasing. They are a sturdy and ancient people, worthy of trust—and in any pacification of the border regions their rights must be respected.

The Tartars

This fine people, of whom there are at least two millions in Russia, are the legacy of Ghenghis Khan to the west. They were left behind when his great empire shrank away to the east, and though the centuries have changed them a good deal they still bear evidence of their Mongol origins. Left in a

strange land they did not perish but built their own cities and developed into a great people. Their Buddhism did not survive and they turned to Islam, for which they were greatly despised by the Mongol lamas, who called them 'Noghai', which means 'dogs'.

The mixture of European and Mongol blood (for they took European wives at the time when the conquests of Ghenghis Khan had reached the Caucasus) has produced a strikingly handsome race with whitish skins, high noses, and deep-set eyes. Their hair is dark, and their dark eyes are particularly lustrous and beautiful.

Those of them who dwell in Sinkiang at the present time fled across the border from Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. They are few in number, but in the cities where they have settled, notably Tacheng and Kuldja, they are already a prominent element in commerce, and many have entered Government service. They are a clever, industrious people, gifted with considerable artistic sense. This finds expression in their music, which has a haunting loveliness never to be forgotten once it is heard. Their music typifies their character, for in it the idioms of East and West are harmoniously mingled.

Of recent years the Soviet authorities have realized how valuable the Tartar population may become if properly handled, and they have been encouraged to develop their peculiar talents. Mohammedanism had never a very strong hold upon them and it is reported that lately large numbers of them are abandoning Islam, becoming increasingly European in their outlook and ways. Those in Sinkiang still appear to be strongly Islamic. Their standards of living are much higher than those of the Moslems and Kasaks and yet they are of frugal habit, still refusing to partake of either pork or wine.

White Russians

These are the sadist elements in the population of the province. Mostly the followers of the White Russian General Annenkov, they are exiles from their own country. Some are not soldiers, but merchants who fled from the Soviets, saving what they could of their possessions.

They are good fighters, and have turned the scale in many desperate encounters. About three thousand in number, they lived in Kuldja and Tacheng until Chin Shu-jen, finding

his own forces poor in quality, enlisted their aid against Ma Chung-yin. Subsequently they played a very important part in the history of Sinkiang.

These are the fourteen discordant elements which he who essays to govern Sinkiang must guide and control.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE FLIGHT OF MA CHUNG-YIN

'To the cleverest warrior the deadliest wound.'

MENCIUS

MA CHUNG-YIN WAS impatient; he would not learn. The large body of 'advisers' which he had the habit of collecting round him existed rather to flatter his dignity than to aid his counsels. In personal leadership he was supreme, and in the training and disciplining of troops he had few equals; but his strategy was defective, and political sense he had none. Nor had he grasped the fact that it is in the sound administration of the region from which it draws its resources that the ultimate strength of an army lies. To him provisioning was a matter of seizure; recruitment meant the forced conscription of all available man-power. On more than one occasion when his orders involved the practical depopulation of whole towns, local commanders would plead with him that sufficient men should be left to ensure the continuance of tillage. 'If you take all these men,' wrote one officer, 'then I must resign my command, for why should I stay to rule a desert, which if your orders are followed this region will surely become.' But not all of his generals had the courage to speak to him so frankly, and thus it was that he did untold harm to the lands through which he moved. This in the end played a part in defeating him, for his system of warfare left him with no reserves of provisions when the tide turned against him, and when the moves of superior forces hemmed him in he found it difficult to come upon fresh towns to plunder. Thus it was that sheer hunger drove his men to desert him; but for this their loyalty might have withstood the strain of continual battle against superior arms.

During my travels in Russian Turkistan news came to me at intervals of Ma Chung-yin's retreat. The Soviet newspapers devoted a good deal of space to Sinkiang, and on the whole their reports were reliable if one learned to interpret them. Their difficulty with news from the war-torn province

was that the Communist creed demanded that the struggles going on in China would be always the revolt of the poor against oppressors, while in fact the internal wars very obstinately refused to conform to this pattern. But once the reader had grasped the nature of the editorial dilemma, it was possible to deduce from the news a reasonably true picture of what was actually taking place. Such deduction was of course helped a great deal by a personal knowledge of the forces in conflict. What with the newspapers and the news which came almost daily from the trade-routes, I felt that I could guess what was happening in Sinkiang, but the account which I now give is more complete than my knowledge at the time, for it has been checked and extended from several sources. Even so it is far less complete than I would wish.

It is probable that had he attacked at once when the truce resulting from my embassy showed signs of breaking, Ma Chung-yin would have captured Tihwa, though not without a hard struggle, for Sheng was a more redoubtable opponent than 'Big Horse' (whose degree of self-confidence bordered at times on madness) would recognize. But the strength with which I had argued in favour of his turning to the south had filled him with indecision, and this was increased by the clamourings of his advisers. Thoughts of empire were in his mind and he did not wish to waste his strength in a struggle for the capital when by biding his time he might build up an invincible force and make war on a grandiose scale, suitable to his imaginings.

Chin Shu-jen, it will be recollected, had turned to Soviet Russia for aid and had made a secret treaty, for which he was subsequently imprisoned on his return to Nanking. In his case the error was aggravated in the eyes of the Central Government by their belief (right or wrong) that personal considerations had played a big part in the affair, and had indeed predominated over the interests of China in Chin Shu-jen's mind. When Sheng made overtures to the Soviet authorities his action was much easier to excuse, even though its ultimate consequences may prove other than he would have wished had he foreseen them.

Sheng did not always show wisdom in his decisions, but at least he faced his problems boldly and never took refuge in shallow optimism. He was a realist, and his approach to

Russia was made only when careful examination of his position had convinced him that this was the only chance. While he knew that Soviet aid could be purchased only for a definite price—the virtual monopoly of Sinkiang trade—the alternative was to see the whole province given over to disorder. He may well have thought that a central government which can offer no aid to a hard-pressed frontier province cannot claim to dictate what policy shall be followed by the 'man on the spot'. Sheng was 'on the spot' both in the normal and the American senses of that phrase, and he had to act quickly or perish.

Already there were signs that Tungans to the north of the capital, intoxicated by the news that their famous co-religionist, 'Big Horse', was advancing with a powerful army, were everywhere revolting and preparing to join forces with him in an attack on Tihwa. News from the south was equally disturbing. Mohammedan chiefs and magistrates were either secretly in communication with Ma Chung-yin, or were openly proclaiming their support of him. There were also nests of marauders who if once they were convinced of the invaders' success would undoubtedly join him, thus obtaining official sanction for their depredations. Altogether things were graver now than they had ever been.

In the midst of all these happenings the Sven Hedin Road Survey, an expedition sponsored by the Nanking authorities to report on the possibilities of road and railway construction in the interior, was advancing from Hami, very ill-informed as to the perils which lay ahead of them. They were to be trapped between opposing armies and to experience at first hand the horrors and hideous uncertainties of war as waged in Sinkiang.

After his defeat at Tze-li-chuan, Ma Chung-yin retired to Turfan. The battle had been fierce and his losses by one account were one thousand men. He was surprised at the quality of Sheng's troops and decided to offer terms of peace. His two delegates to Tihwa, one of whom was his secretary, who had studied in Moscow, said that their leader was willing to retreat to Hami on condition that the Government would accept responsibility for paying his troops. This was an admission of defeat on the part of Ma, and Sheng added two further conditions; first, that he must aid the Government in

suppressing bandits and must guard and keep open the road from Hami to the capital.

About one month before I left with Dr. Lo for Tacheng, I was asked by Sheng and Liu to go once more to see 'Big Horse' and discuss the terms. But I pointed out that military positions were involved, with which I was not familiar, and I recommended that Liu Pin, the chief of staff, should be sent, which was agreed.

In a few days he returned together with Ma's delegates (who had accompanied him) and reported that the terms were accepted. It was decided that Ma Chung-yin should be Garrison Commander of the East—a post implying subordination to Sheng. His troops were allowed positions at Shan Shan, Hami, and Chen-hsi—the last-named town being north of Hami. The seal of office was ready to be sent him and now magistrates were appointed at Turfan and Shan Shan.

Once again all seemed well, but now Hodja Nyas moved his troops southwards across the mountains to Toksun.

Under the spur of religious hatred, Moslems and Tungans united to slaughter the Chinese, but once they had experienced the fury of their allies, the Moslems realized that the Chinese were less dangerous. Hodja Nyas now pledged allegiance to Sheng. The troops of Ma Shek-ming, learning of this defection, clashed with the Moslems and defeated them with great loss, forcing Hodja Nyas to retreat westwards to Karashar. Again Ma Shek-ming advanced and the Moslems moved from the west to Kuchar—which strengthened considerably the position of the Tungans in the east, for Karashar is an important junction of caravan trails and a gateway to the north.

Seeing that he was now stronger, Ma Chung-yin delayed his return from Turfan. This filled Sheng with uneasiness, as when Dr. Lo failed to persuade Ma to come to the capital, he began to think that there was a plot against the Government. He therefore detained Ma's delegates, as I have related, as a precautionary measure.

When I was with Dr. Lo at Semipalatinsk we learned that Ma Chung-yin had again advanced to the pass of Dawancheng and that there was fighting going on there.

Ma had decided upon a lightning stroke and had armed his troops with such rapidity that the capital had no knowledge of the danger until he was at their gates. Working his way

through the hills he evaded the forces sent to check him and appeared suddenly in the west. He occupied Devil Mountain, seized the wireless station, and approached the West Bridge. Sheng, with wise strategy, did not waste his efforts, but concentrated on holding the hill Yee-pao-cheng-Kung ('One shell brings victory'), which dominated the western approach to the city. The queer name of this hill comes from the days of Yakub Beg, for the Chinese army attacking, having occupied the crest, fired only one shell and the rebels surrendered.

Ma could not take the hill, for the Government troops, led by Sheng in person, knew that this was a life-and-death struggle. They put up a splendid resistance and at last Ma Chung-yin was forced to draw off his men.

Meanwhile, at Kuldja, Chang Pei-yuan, who had never been friendly to Sheng, learning that 'Big Horse' was attacking Tihwa with every chance of success, mobilized his own troops, some three thousand in number, and moving them towards the east, seized the main road between Tacheng and the capital.

This was very serious for Sheng, for he had now no communications in the north and west; but suddenly the fortunes of war changed. A strong force of Government troops surprised Chang's army, ambushing them in a narrow valley. Machine-guns wrought such fearful destruction that the rebels were killed almost to a man, their commander committing suicide when he saw that all was lost.

Chang's second-in-command at Kuldja revenged himself for this defeat by killing the Government envoys—the divisional commander of the Manchurian troops, Hsing, and Lu-lun, who it will be remembered had refused to undertake the embassy to Ma Chung-yin at Kucheng, on the ground that it was too dangerous. This ironic turn of events indicates what a quicksand Sinkiang had become.

What happened now is obscure. Peter Fleming, who travelled in Sinkiang a year later, writes as follows:

> 'Early in January 1934 the Tungan forces beleaguering Uruniclir were taken in the rear by Uriniclir's creditors—a force of several thousand Soviet troops advancing from the west and supported by aeroplanes, armoured cars, and possibly light tanks. On the banks of the frost-bound

Tutung River, thirty miles west of Uriniclir, a battle raged for several days; but the Tungan's unskilled ferocity was no match for a mechanized foe, and the troops—who were all peasants from parts of China as yet but little inured to the blessings of modern civilization—were badly demoralized by gas-bombs dropped by the Soviet airmen. Ma Chung-yin withdrew in good order westward along the main road to Kashgar.'

As a commentary on this story, let me quote Sir Eric Teichman, who was in Tihwa two years later and had a long conversation with Sheng:

'The Tupan made a special point of explaining his attitude towards my mission and the reasons concerned with my personal safety, which had led him at the outset to oppose my coming; also his attitude towards the National Government at Nanking, to whom he professed his loyalty and full obedience. But, he had just emerged victorious from a life-and-death struggle with the Tungans, and he owed nothing to Nanking, but much to Moscow, for the assistance which had enabled him to triumph over Ma Chung-yin.

'Regarding the situation quite objectively, it is difficult to see what other line Nanking or Sheng Tupan could have adopted at that time. Both were the victims of capricious circumstance and the great distances separating Turkistan from China; while the Soviet, with all the resources and implements of modern warfare, were close at hand.'

(*Journey to Turkistan*, p. 105.)

Assuming that these facts are true, it is interesting to speculate why the Soviets should have helped Sheng. In the first place, he was the legal ruler of Tihwa, approved by Nanking; and, secondly, Ma was, in strict law, a rebel; thirdly, the Soviets suspected that Japanese influences were behind the disorders in Sinkiang.

The newspapers in Tashkent stated that Ma had Japanese advisers, and that with the Japanese in control of Turkistan the oilfields of Baku would be within reach of their bombers.

BEFORE LEAVING CHUGUCHAK FOR NOVO-SIBIRSK: SOVIET CONSUL ON RIGHT OF DR. LO

AT THE CHINESE CONSULATE, SEMIPALATINSK: AUTHOR THIRD FROM LEFT; LO FOURTH

Thus, said the writer, Russia will be attacked from east and west. This seemed to me fantastic at the time, but it is true that Ma did have at least two Japanese on his staff. How much influence these men had is hard to estimate. As we have seen, Ma had a miscellaneous collection of 'staffs'—some, he told me, came from my own province of Foochow.

Probably Ma was quite unaware how the presence of the Japanese at his head-quarters would prejudice Russia against him. It flattered his vanity to have a staff of 'experts,' irrespective of their nationality.

Ma Chung-yin had lost two thousand of his men in this fighting, and it is evidence of their bravery that only two hundred were taken prisoners. Most of them preferred to sell their lives dearly and fought to the last.

Harassed by bombing from the air, enfiladed by machine-guns mounted on mobile units, and heavily shelled whenever they broke from cover, they retired to a narrow valley, and a body of the attackers, advancing too rapidly, were ambushed and forced to fall back in disorder.

But Ma now knew that his case was hopeless. Retreating to Korla in the south, he there seized the lorries of the Sven Hedin Expedition. Here, three aeroplanes bombed his troops again, stampeding their horses.

On the captured lorries Ma rode south. At Bai he had a narrow escape from attacking Government forces, and again at Kuchar he was only just ahead of the pursuit. The chase then slackened, however, and he reached Aksu unmolested.

In Sven Hedin's book, *Big Horse's Flight*, he tells how the two drivers of the Expedition whom Ma had pressed into his service, were sent back by him with the lorries, safe and sound. They were both born diplomats and flattered him by comparing his campaign with those of Tamerlane and Napoleon. His subordinates thought that when their usefulness was ended they should be shot at once to avoid their giving valuable information to the pursuers. But Ma thought otherwise. Probably he knew that the game was up. He knew how to take a beating.

That is a story worth reading. It seems that at this period, despite his defeat, Ma was in good spirits. He joked with the drivers as he rode beside them, asked them to sing him Chinese

songs; and behaved more like a boy on a holiday expedition than a great general facing ruin. This further sidelight on an enigmatic personality I mention because it adds just the last touch of the inexplicable to Ma's character. What to make of him I never really knew!

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE REVOLT IN SOUTH SINKIANG

'Tien Shan in May
No blossoms gay,
Snow on the hill
And winter chill.'
LI PO (Tang Dynasty)

IN THE FIRST stages of his retreat from Tihwa, Ma Chung-yin had fled headlong through the mountains, harried by aircraft, always in danger of ambush, barely able to hold together his starving and ill-armed troops. But gradually the pursuit weakened, so he was able to secure a breathing-space before his descent upon Kashgar.

During our long discussions at Kucheng, I had pointed out to him what excellent scope the south of Sinkiang might afford to his ambitions, and he was doubtless much encouraged during the ordeal of his great retreat by the thought that he would be welcomed as a deliverer by his fellow Moslems when he reached his journey's end. His greatest quality was his resilience. Though subject to moods of black depression, he was never for long a prey to despair. As he approached Kashgar he was already planning to found an empire there.

He knew little of what awaited him. For many months the situation in the south had been so confused that it was impossible to judge the truth of rumour. Official communication was practically at an end and all the normal functions of government had collapsed over a wide area. More was known in Russia and in India than in Tihwa concerning happenings at Khotan and Kashgar.

In seeking the causes of Ma Chung-yin's final failure, it is necessary to attempt some brief account of the course of events in Kashgar prior to his arrival, and for this purpose we must return to the time of the ill-fated Chin Shu-jen. When, following upon the assassination in 1928 of the strong and all-seeing Governor Yang his subordinate attempted to hold the reins of administration in hands far less capable, guided by an inferior intelligence, it was not long before the Moslems in remote

districts sensed that there was now weakness in the capital, and they at once plotted revolt. Yang had made few concessions to them, but he had at least ensured peace, fair taxation, and impartial administration of justice. His successor showed an equal inflexibility, but failed to offset this by efficient and equitable government. Tax-gatherers commenced to practise extortion, justice was tampered with, and money which should have been applied to public purposes went into the pockets of officials. To what extent Chin Shu-jen connived at such methods is doubtful, but it is at least certain that he did not take energetic steps against them. The Moslems had definite grievances, and these, focused by religious hatred, soon led to bloodthirsty rebellion everywhere in the north.

The general situation in the south was not affected in spite of vague rumours of unrest from the capital. Aspirations may have been raised in the breasts of those politically or fanatically inclined. The south was under the able and just rule of the Tao-tai Ma Shao-wu, who, in his own sphere, maintained a nice balance and was not unduly influenced by any outside power.

It appeared that the unrest in the south arose among religious leaders who had visited Turkey, India, Arabia, and Afghanistan and had learned that there were universal stirrings as well as progress in the world. The Chinese régime did, it is true, refuse adequate educational facilities to the Moslems, and no Moslem official was appointed to any senior post. Perhaps, through lack of administrative training, none was fitted for higher posts.

The first uprising occurred in the early spring of 1933 in the district of Pi-shan, between Kashgar and Khotan, and the Tao-tai Ma Shao-wu at that city at once gave orders for the troops to move against the rebels. Additional forces were hastily recruited, and two battalions under the command of Chin Shu-chi, a brother of Chin Shu-jen, set out for disaffected districts. No sooner had they left, however, than the Tao-tai was informed of a new danger. A Tungan leader from Kashgar, by name Ma Tsan-chang, was advancing towards Kuchar from Karashar and meeting with little or no resistance.

Having occupied Kuchar without hostilities, the Tungan chief allied himself with a local leader named Timur, an able

fellow, who had been head of the mule wagon service. Together they captured Bai and advanced to the walls of Aksu. An urgent message arrived at Kashgar asking for immediate assistance, and Ma Shao-wu responded by sending a Colonel Yang with a small force. Meanwhile Chin Shu-chi had been meeting with reverses and at last, finding himself beset on every side, committed suicide.

The situation was rendered still more grave by the news from Tihwa. The revolt at Turfan had been checked, but the rebels had gone southwards and had worked round to Karashar. This city lies on the main route to the west, and by its fall communication with the capital was cut off. Telegraphic instructions were still coming through, however, and while at his wits' end as to how to deal with local conditions, Ma Shao-wu received word that he had been appointed 'Chief Bandit Suppressor in the Rear' by Chin Shu-jen, with orders to relieve Aksu and Karashar and to pacify the whole of the south.

That was the last order which got through. With the cutting of the telegraph, the isolation of Kashgar was complete. Immediately the wildest rumours spread abroad and everywhere the Moslem villagers revolted against the Chinese. Tax-collectors and money-lenders were the first to be slain, but soon no Chinese were safe from slaughter, for the Ahuns urged their followers to strike down the unbelievers in the name of the Prophet. Within a few weeks the whole system of government was at an end, and the destruction was said by eyewitnesses to surpass that inflicted in the classic revolt of Yakub Beg in 1870. In the midst of all this turmoil there were a few villages which continued their daily life undisturbed. In these places, Chinese officials, respected by their neighbours for their fair dealing, continued at their posts, still carrying out their duties while looting and massacre spread all round them.

Following the death of Chin Shu-chi, one of his lieutenants, Liu, who had acted as chief of staff, took over the command without the approval of Ma Shao-wu, but it is to the credit of the Tao-tai that he did not let personal issues prevent proper co-operation in the emergency, for he confirmed Liu in his position and sent him to relieve Pa-chu (Maralbashi).

In the meantime Colonel Yang was finding the task entrusted to him far beyond his powers, for by the time he

arrived at Aksu, Ma Tsan-chang and Timur were encamped in strong positions adjacent to the city. Not only were they well armed but they heavily outnumbered the relieving forces, so Yang was forced to retreat. Knowing that his only chance was to make an immediate contact with the troops commanded by Liu, Yang moved in the direction of Pa-chu, but Timur determined to prevent this manœuvre, and by a quick march across the hills he got into position between the two enemy commanders. Liu was not a good strategist and knew very little of the district in which he was marching. He was thus an easy prey for the skilful and energetic Timur, who lay in ambush for him along the road to Pa-chu.

The Moslems of the town, learning of Liu's movements, came out to meet him with a strongly armed force. They got into touch with Timur and were thus able to inflict a severe defeat upon the Chinese forces. Liu was killed and his men fled in confusion. Tao-tai Ma Shao-wu was informed in Kashgar that the two battalions on which he had relied were completely routed and that his own position was thus one of extreme peril.

There was still the force under Yang, who was an able commander, but the defeat of Liu had placed these troops in an impossible position, and when they realized that they were doomed they deserted. Yang himself managed to escape, but by the time Ma Tsan-chang and Timur occupied Chia-shih (Faizabad), a town on the road to Kashgar, there was no army left to oppose them and Moslems from all around were flocking to join the victorious rebels.

Ma Shao-wu was desperate. He himself was a Tungan and most of the Moslems in the city of Kashgar were loyal to him; but he had no troops with which to oppose the attackers and he knew that immediate action was necessary. If he waited until the city was besieged his case would be hopeless, for many of the citizens would certainly side with the enemy. On the other hand, if he could meet the advance in the mountain passes, there was a chance that he might prevent the rebels from reaching Kashgar, in which event his chance of success, though still slender, would be much improved.

In his extremity of need he determined to offer arms to the Kirghiz in his district and to enlist them in his army. They were wild tribesmen and utterly unreliable, but the situation was so perilous that despite the protests of the Moslem

citizens Ma Shao-wu went through with this plan, saying it was the only hope left to the city.

The enlistment completed, a mixed force under Lieutenant Chen, the most experienced of Ma's subordinates, was sent to hold a mountain pass above Chia-shih with orders to resist the advance of Timur to the last. But though they had been induced to enlist by glowing promises, the Kirghiz contingent had no stomach for their tasks. All their sympathies were with the marauders and they did not propose to perish in defence of the law and order which they hated and despised. Their leader Usman, therefore, sent messengers secretly to Timur, who sent back instructions that he should assassinate Chen and himself assume the command. This Usman did, and immediately commenced a career of plunder on his own account. There was, of course, no reason why he should take orders from Timur. In fact, there was every sign that among the rebel forces rogues were falling out.

The first town which Usman attacked was Su-fu, the Moslem city at Kashgar, and he was extremely thorough in his methods. The merchants had fled, carrying with them as much of their wealth as was portable, so Usman systematically looted their houses, and soon most of the town was greatly disordered. No one who had any possessions was spared and most of the Chinese were massacred on sight, but after a while the troops tired of purposeless slaughter and the remaining Chinese were spared on condition of going over to Islam.

It was now clear to Ma Shao-wu that his position in Kashgar was untenable, so he left the city, which was at once occupied by Timur. As soon as the authority was in their hands the Moslems elected a new Tao-tai, Yu-wen-ping of Turfan, a leader of knowledge and ability who was a graduate of the Russian college at Tihwa. Ma Tsan-chang, who had coveted the appointment, was somewhat disgruntled at this; but he was rewarded for his efforts by being given control of the Chinese city, Su-leh. The whole district of Kashgar was now in rebel hands.

At Khotan in the extreme south there was still more trouble. The city had been occupied by Sabit Da Mullah, who had as his ally a Kirghiz, Jani Beg. In Tsarist days Jani Beg entered the Imperial Service and had received a sound military education. When the revolution broke out in Russia he fought

desperately for the Tsar. He had no chance of victory and was several times defeated, but on each occasion he had retreated into Chinese Turkistan to wait for another chance.

At length he had been tracked down and arrested by the Tao-tai Ma Shao-wu, and the Soviet authorities at once made urgent representations that he should be handed over. Ma refused, however, on the grounds that Jani Beg was a political refugee, and for his safety had sent him to Khotan, strongly guarded.

Sabit gave him his liberty in order to make use of his military skill. A strong force was collected and advanced towards Sa-che (Yarkand), the Mullah now taking the title 'King of Khotan' and calling on all to acknowledge his rule.

Sabit Da Mullah was the middle one of three brothers. The senior, Mahd Amir, was in Khotan and Yarkand up to the time the retreating Tungans reached Yarkand from Kashgar. Later, he went to Afghanistan via India, it was supposed. In the earlier fighting, though Sabit was the more politically minded, yet he took orders from the elder brother. It was the moderation of Mahd Amir which saved the lives of many Chinese and other 'non-believers' as well as the Swedish missionaries when Yarkand was first occupied. Abdullah, the youngest brother, was an active leader and was killed while trying to relieve Sabit Da Mullah who was besieged by the Tungans in Engishar (Yengi Hissar). In Sa-che both Moslem and Chinese populations allied to resist the attack, and even when they saw that there was no hope of their receiving aid from Kashgar they continued to resist with great determination.

The situation along the southern border was now so uncertain that the common people had great difficulty in knowing where to give their allegiance. The conflict was no longer clear-cut between Chinese and Moslems, and each of the several rebel leaders was aiming at personal power. Usman, the Kirghiz chief, was looting and murdering in all directions, and it was soon plain that he spared no one in his quest of plunder. Not only Chinese were massacred but Moslems and Tungans were slain. Furthermore, their women were seized for Usman's personal pleasure, and it was said that he married thirty wives.

Timur now regretted that he had encouraged Usman to rebel and approached Ma Tsan-chang, with whom he had

been on rather bad terms for some time, to ask whether they could not band together to rid the province of this Kirghiz brigand. Ma consented to this course, but he still bore much ill will to Timur and was determined on personal vengeance if the chance came his way. What exactly happened is uncertain, but on his way to attack Usman, Timur was assassinated, presumably on the instructions of Ma Tsan-chang.

The results of this move were, however, very different from what Ma had expected, since Timur's troops, seeing their well-beloved leader murdered and guessing who was to blame, immediately went over to Usman and urged him to lead them against Ma Tsan-chang. Ma, seeing that his plans had miscarried and his own position was precarious, at once retreated to the Chinese city of Su-leh (Han-cheng), still in command of his own forces. Usman at once became master of Kashgar Old City.

Usman's followers were wild and utterly ungovernable tribesmen, and the whole countryside was given over to murder and rapine. There was now no form of government, and all were in daily and hourly fear of slaughter. The Moslems who had rebelled against Chinese rule were now forced to admit that never in the worst periods of repression had their former rulers done them such injuries as they now suffered at the hands of those who claimed to be their deliverers, and they decided that as soon as opportunity offered they would request the Chinese to aid them.

It was rumoured that the Provincial Government at Tihwa was planning an expedition to restore order in the south, but news was scanty, and the flight of Chin Shu-jen gave the impression that conditions were serious in the capital and that there was little prospect of help from that quarter. Thus the Moslems who groaned under the lawlessness of Usman turned to Sabit and begged that he would aid them. 'Never for three hundred years,' they said, 'have our troubles been such as they are now. It was bad to suffer under alien rule, but now we are opposed by those of our own Faith. We pray that you, our Mullah, will deliver us.'

It was planned that Usman should be arrested and that Ahdi Beg, the most oppressive of his lieutenants, should be executed. By a bold stroke this was accomplished, and the undisciplined Kirghiz, lacking a leader, were soon disarmed.

Kashgar was now once more under Moslem rule. As for Usman, he went off to his home in the hills on a hunting expedition and did not return to Kashgar.

During these troubled times Ma Tsan-chang had made a compact with Ma Shao-wu for the defence of the Chinese city of Su-leh, at Kashgar, where most of the Chinese officials lived. When it was seen that this city was being energetically and successfully defended, all the Chinese survivors from miles around flocked there. The city was besieged for seven months. From August 1933 to February 1934 Ma Shao-wu was a virtual prisoner of Ma Tsan-chang. He and all the Chinese were treated abominably by this Tungan leader, who though courageous was unbalanced and ill-mannered.

Meanwhile in the Moslem city the people had elected Sabit, 'King of Khotan', to be their ruler, and it was their wish that a new Government should be organized. There were, however, two groups of opinion—those who thought that while local independence was preserved there should be nominal allegiance to the Central Provincial Government at Tihwa; and those who thought that a clean break should be made with Chinese rule.

In the end the secessionists triumphed, for they could point out with some truth that the Governments at Tihwa and Nanking were powerless to offer any help to the border areas of their territories, and that South Sinkiang had sufficient natural resources to be able to exist as an independent state. Much blood had been shed to win their independence, they argued, and to admit even nominal sovereignty to Tihwa would lead in the end to the same state of corruption and oppression against which they had risen in revolt. The Chinese had done nothing for the south—there were no hospitals, no roads, no transport services, in fact nothing whatever to show for the money exacted in taxation. Furthermore, there had been cases of oppression for religious reasons, and it was intolerable to risk any return to such a state of affairs.

The more far-seeing merchants were of the opinion that this was a wrong point of view, and that the interests of the governed might be better served if there were a Chinese government in the background to whom appeal could be made should the elected local rulers abuse their powers. A local Moslem administration, these merchants maintained, would

function far more justly if it did not exercise too absolute a jurisdiction. Moreover, the Chinese, despite their obvious faults, had proved more experienced and peaceful administrators than some of the Moslem princes who had reigned from time to time.

There was a good deal to be said for this principle of a balance of power, but it was too subtle a policy to be explained to the common people, and so the secessionists carried the day. Theirs was a clear-cut policy with a patriotic appeal. Sounder but more complex arguments had no chance against it.

In September 1933 the Republic of Eastern Turkistan was proclaimed with much rejoicing. The flag showed a crescent moon and a star on a white ground, on which there were also written certain texts from the Koran. All the Government seals were remoulded and at every street corner slogans were posted up urging that the Chinese should be driven out of the new state. Delegates were sent across the mountains to Afghanistan to purchase ammunition from the Mohammedan ruler there, and it was proposed that certain Turkish subjects who had been exiled by the Kemalists and had taken refuge in the East should be offered citizenship in return for their help in founding the republic. Envoys were also sent to Tashkent to seek assistance from Russia; and it was from a report issued by the Tass News Agency in U.S.S.R. that the outside world first gained accurate knowledge of happenings in South Sinkiang.

Sabit appears to have acted with considerable energy, for following upon his declaration of independence he did not allow grass to grow beneath his feet. His envoys to Afghanistan made preliminary arrangements for recognition of the new Government, and then left for India to impress upon the British the advantages to them of a further buffer state beyond the great mountains. In the meantime an appeal was issued to all exiled Turks throughout the East, promising them a safe abiding place under the flag of Eastern Turkistan.

The visit of the envoy to India (he was the first assistant to the Minister for War in the new administration) awakened the suspicions of Russia, and the Tass Agency declared in a later message that the new state was fostered by Britain as a spearhead for an attack upon China and Russia. This was based on the declarations of Sabit, which showed great hostility to

China, and on the fact that he had not treated overtures from Tashkent with the respect they deserved.

The first actions of the new state showed a fanatical devotion to Islam, and some unhappy women who returned from Russia to their native villages were executed for not wearing the veil. This striking evidence of a return to the old ways won great applause from the Ahuns, but the peasantry soon had reason to regret the trust they had placed in their new rulers. The Government was purely military and the expense of supporting an always increasing number of troops led to heavy taxation, which often amounted to confiscation pure and simple. Rich merchants were informed that since the soldiers were for their protection it was just that they should support them; but when the troops quartered upon their wealthy hosts they acted with great arrogance and plundered all they could lay hands upon. Other soldiers whose pay was in arrears made good the deficiency by wholesale confiscations on their own account, and though the officers sometimes gave these measures the appearance of law and rendered receipts for the stores they requisitioned, since the accounts were never settled the villagers might just as well have been plundered by an enemy, and it was not long before there was great discontent.

Those of the rich merchants who could find means to make the journey fled into British India and applied for naturalization there, while the villagers said that they looked for the coming of a Chinese army of deliverance as to rain after a drought. Meanwhile the two Ma's, who had formed an alliance for the defence of Su-leh, continued to control that city, and by just and efficient administration won the allegiance not only of all the Chinese but of many of the Moslems in the surrounding districts. Soon there was a general realization that under Ma Shao-wu there had been peace and justice, and certain of the peasants sent their taxes to him without being asked, a gesture the importance of which will be recognized by those familiar with the peoples of the East.

It was not till February 1934 that the Tungan troops under Ma Chung-yin arrived and they began to relieve the New City. The gates were opened and traffic proceeded between the old and new cities. Ma Shao-wu again resumed his duties as Commissioner or Tao-tai. Ma Tsan-chang remained in the

New City and the new Tungan commander Ma Fu-san in the Old City. Then, after driving off the attack made by Yusaf Jani and other elements, the Tungans set about clearing the surrounding district. There, as always, they gave allegiance to the Nanking Government. Next, they proceeded to besiege Sabit Da Mullah in Yengi Hissar, though they did not give up Kashgar old and new cities. After a desperate siege in which both defenders and attackers showed the greatest heroism, the town finally fell to the Tungans. Though it was only a minor engagement, Sabit and all his officials were forced to flee the city. In spite of this early success, the attackers found it impossible to consolidate their position.

In the first place the Tungan troops showed themselves to be rapacious and undisciplined, so that the villagers, exasperated by frequent military plunderings, turned against them. Also it was soon clear that they were few in number, and Ma's main army, which they said was following them, did not arrive. The Chinese city was still intact and they could make no attack upon it, since there were not troops enough to do battle. They also realized that the peasants would not believe that their leader represented the Chinese Government if they attacked the Chinese city. They therefore turned southward and eastward in pursuit of the 'King of Khotan', but even energy and determination could not make up for the deficiency of numbers and equipment.

The strength of the new Republic had remained problematic. Following upon reports that it had fallen came an explicit declaration that the British would not in any circumstances support it. The London *Times* made it quite clear that His Majesty's Government could not give any countenance to rebellious acts of any sort against a friendly Government. Sinkiang was a province of China and no other rule would be recognized. As to the approaches to Turkey, Afghanistan, and Persia, these Governments must act as they thought proper, but the approach to New Delhi for arms could only be described as most improper. Friendship between Great Britain and China was most cordial and H.M. Government would not for one moment consider giving aid to rebels against a friendly power. The editorial concluded by advising the new administration to make peace with Nanking 'before it was too late!'

In view of these facts it might be thought that the attack by Tungans on the British Consulate at Kashgar had political significance. As a result of this unlucky happening, a British subject was killed, the brother of a Turki orderly in the Consulate likewise lost his life and four British were wounded, including the wife of the Consul-General, Mrs. Thomson Glover, who was shot through the lung very near the heart, by a stray bullet. The truth was that the Tungans had captured Kashgar eight days before, and had left the city to drive off rival rebel bands. While the conquerors of Kashgar were out, rebels slipped into the Old City and overpowered the Tungan sentinels. While all this was happening, the Tungans returned and again drove out their rivals. In the course of this the alleged rebel refugees climbed over the British Consulate wall and it was at that moment when the casualties took place.

Immediately before the Tungans reached Kashgar in February 1934, large Moslem forces arrived from Maralbashi under the leadership of Mahmud, who had formerly been an ally of Ma Chung-yin, but after some dissension he developed Pan-Moslem ideas. Mahmud left for Kashgar before the Tungans. It is worth noting that he and his men made up the bulk of the provincial troops that arrived at Kashgar in July 1934 to establish order. The troops consisted of some 800 Chinese, 1,200–2,000 Moslems under Mahmud and a White Russian Brigade. It would seem that Mahmud, by turning against Ma Chung-yin, was able to obtain some external support.

Mahmud, formerly an associate of Hodja Nyas, had gained the leadership on account of his wealth. He and his friend Hodja Nyas naturally quarrelled with the Tungans, who kept the lion's share of the booty and only gave the useless rifles to Mahmud. Hodja Nyas and Mahmud were rivals of the Kashgar groups of Moslems. Sabit Da Mullah, supported by his adventurer-advisers, had refused to unite with him or acknowledge the Nanking Government, but when Hodja Nyas and Mahmud advanced on Kashgar in January, Sabit and various Moslem groups were overawed and joined them without fighting. Thus, Sabit's grandiose régime ended and his unsupported paper currency printed in Kashgar became waste paper. In turn, within the month, all the Moslem forces of Hodja Nyas, Mahmud, and Sabit withdrew from Kashgar

before the advance of the Tungans without a struggle. The name of the Tungan leader Ma Chung-yin inspired terror and panic among all Moslems in the south, who were superior in numbers.

It was not till April that Ma Chung-yin himself arrived, which was in the middle of the siege. The long retreat had been accomplished only at terrible cost. It is probable that even the leader was exhausted. On account of heavy losses, he ordered the siege to be abandoned, but Ma Tsan-chang and Ma Fu-san overruled and brought the operation to a successful conclusion.

Ma Chung-yin made some progress at first and captured several towns, but the people did not flock to him as he had hoped they would, and soon there came news that Sabit Da Mullah had rallied his forces. By the time Ma Chung-yin reached Kashgar, the Tungan troops headed by Ma Fu-san, acting on his own military initiative and instinct, had already attacked and occupied the town of Yengi Hissar. Though the King of Khotan fell in the battle, the army retreated in good order, and with the assistance of others reformed their lines and, perceiving the weakness of Ma Chung-yin, prepared to take revenge.

After Ma Chung-yin's initial success his prospects had rapidly deteriorated. He had failed to gather together a sufficient force, an army from Tihwa was pressing on his heels, and the troops from Khotan, which he had defeated, were rallying to strike back. At length the administration of Yengi Hissar was again put into the hands of Ma Shao-wu.

Sabit Da Mullah's power in Kashgar Old City only lasted from November 1933 to January 1934. He was egged on by various outside adventurers of whom two may be mentioned. Tewfik Sharif Effendi, of doubtful origin, perhaps from Syria, called himself a Turk. He was brave but had a reputation for slipperiness in Saudi Arabia. Another adventurer who came via Afghanistan was Dr. Mustapha Ali, a talker and political propagandist. They persuaded Sabit to declare himself head of the Republic of Eastern Turkistan, but one if not both had an eye on what this puppet régime might bring.

At length, Ma Chung-yin was persuaded by the Russian Consul that his situation was hopeless, and together with his higher officers he crossed into the Soviet territory at Irkeshtan.

What inducements were offered to him it is difficult to gather; nor is it easy at first sight to understand why the Soviet Government, which had played so big a part in his downfall, should have aided him at the last. Perhaps the truth was that the U.S.S.R. had need of a leader who understood Mohammedans, and that they thought he would be a useful card to play if the Government at Tihwa were to prove intransigent now that it was safely established.

Without Soviet intervention, it is highly improbable that any forces were capable of defeating Ma Chung-yin on equal terms. Aerial attacks had produced moral superiority, but, man for man, Ma Chung-yin could take on Manchurian volunteers or White Russians and had indeed done so. Nor can Ma Chung-yin be said to have been hard pressed. After he was persuaded to go to Russia, the Tungan troops drew back to Yarkand. No provincial forces came into Kashgar for over three weeks and the community there remained unprotected during that period.

Ma Chung-yin knew that he was beaten, but his colleague Ma Ho-san urged him to fight on, saying that they might still rally the Moslems and Tungans of the south. When 'Big Horse' left him, Ma Ho-san took over the remaining troops and established himself at Khotan where he remained in power for several years.

Dr. Wilhelm Filchner, the famous German scientist, who went to Khotan in 1936, was imprisoned there by Ma Ho-san, of whom he says that he was an urbane and dangerous young man, passionately fond of hunting and basket ball! He played almost every afternoon with his bodyguard in the front courtyard of the yamen. He also cycled down the street of the bazaar with great devotion while twenty-five of his bodyguard, armed with Mauser pistols, raced behind him at the double.

Ma Chung-yin was first taken to Tashkent and then to Moscow. There, I was told he entered upon a course of military training. A rumour persists that he has been sent back to Sinkiang, but I have as yet no confirmation of this. It was a strange and somewhat ignominious ending to the saga of 'Big Horse', but when it is remembered how young he was and how much he had crowded into the first years of his life, it becomes evident that his history is not yet ended. What has

happened to him is not yet certain—it seems unlikely that so great an individualist would take kindly to collectivism; but though he may not profit much from instruction in economics, if he is given a sound military training by the Soviet academies, it may well be that he has still to play a part in re-shaping the map of the Eastern World.

With his flight, generally believed to be the result of trickery, his fantastic ambition came to an end. The troops from Tihwa met with little resistance and soon recaptured Karashar, Kuchar, and Aksu. By this time the situation in Kashgar had improved and it was possible to restore government control there. When Liu Pin the new Garrison Commander of South Sinkiang arrived on the scene, only a few Tungans around Khotan were still in a state of revolt, and these were soon forced to take refuge in the hills.

It was not thought worth while to pursue them, so much remained to be done in the border cities. The whole structure of government had crumbled and now was slowly rebuilt. There were no reprisals, and the Moslems were given considerable voice in local administration. Trade at once revived and a period of prosperity appeared to have begun.

CHAPTER TWENTY

FUTURE OF SINKIANG

'Soil is more important than weather; men working together more important than soil.'
MENCIUS

SOMETIMES, AS I worked at my studies with the many volumes of the great encyclopaedia of Sinkiang spread before me, I could hear the roar of the Eurasian Air Company's huge machines as they passed overhead; and it was strange to reflect that the desert highways, which for so many centuries had afforded the only land route between East and West, were now the path of the aeroplane, taking hours instead of months, and days instead of years.

Only the traveller who has observed for himself the difficulties of the journey and experienced that awe which the level immensities of Asia breed in the soul of man, can realize the strength of the urge to trade which led to the establishment of the Silk Road in the face of every obstacle which Nature could devise. Great plains, and great mountains; smooth sands, and rocks so jagged that the stoutest leather seems to tear like paper at their touch; winds laden with knife-edged particles of ice, and blasts of air so hot that the lungs feel singed as they pass; peril by snow and storm, torture by thirst; that was the journey which the early travellers knew—and even in these days it wants only a fragment of metal, a damaged bearing, perhaps, to grind among the oiled surfaces of the huge motors, for pilot and passengers to be faced with the same dangers that Marco Polo met and conquered, for mountains, skies, and deserts have not changed with the passing of the years.

The road from East to West was always a challenge to the stoutest hearts and to the most eager curiosities. Of those who travelled it, the Polos have won most fame, but there were many before them whose names are less well known, and doubtless many more who made the journey but never thought of writing down the record of their adventuring.

Not only trade crossed the deserts; knowledge went too, and

faith. The interchange of culture through the centuries—traces of which are everywhere for the trained observer to uncover—presents many problems to the historian and archaeologist, but each new discovery increases our certainty that East and West were in continual contact, each borrowing from the other fragments of original thought, merchandise more precious than the silks and spices.

One hundred years before Christ, Chang-chien was sent by the Emperor Han-wu-ti upon the first recorded westward journey. In those times the frontier region was known as Hsi-yu, and there were many inhabitants of Aryan blood. These tribes were of Iranian origin, though the history of their migration remains obscure. Their languages, however, have been identified, and were three in number: Tu-xo-lo, current in the districts now known as Kuchar and Karashar; the Khotan language centred round that region; and Sogdi, diffused over the whole of Hsi-yu. The tribal organization of these peoples seems to have been stable, but with the passage of time pressure increased upon them from all directions, until during the Han Dynasty the Chinese overran at least two-thirds of the territory, while tribes of Turkish origin flowed in from the west. The Iranians intermarried freely with the new-comers, and from that time there has been a strange mixture of races in Sinkiang.

Following a time of intermingling comes a hardening of separation. It is differences of religion which hold men apart. For centuries the doctrines of Buddha and Mahomet have struggled for supremacy on the frontiers of China, and blood has flowed in terrifying and useless profusion, proving nothing, achieving nothing, often submerging all.

Standing aside from all such conflicts, the historian looks on aghast. To see indolent Moslem farmers, living a prosperous life in a fertile valley, with little to distress them and much to bless, change at the call of their Ahuns to wild fanatics eager for the blood of unbelievers, is to despair of the human race. While it is true that there are often underlying causes of an economic nature when the outbreaks occur, it is quite a mistake to attribute the unrest purely to material causes. Often when it must be clear to any sane man that there is everything to be lost by insurrection and nothing to be gained, even when there has been no oppression and no deep-seated

grievances exist, the Moslems may, under the influence of some fiery preacher, commit atrocities which stagger the imagination.

Thus peace in Sinkiang is always an uneasy peace; for even the just official who has no reason to reproach himself cannot tell what is brewing around him.

In the time of Han-wu-ti the imperial records tell of thirty-six separate countries south of the Tien Shan. North of the range was the country of the Mongols, and to the west lay the country of the Turks. During the disturbances of the Hsing-Mon Dynasty, that short and disastrous period which lasted from A.D. 9–22, the Mongols gained control of all Hsi-yu, but during subsequent years five states south of the great range revolted, but immediately began to fight among themselves. At this time the Turks in the western region, Wou-soun, had never been brought under Chinese rule.

Internal disturbances in China lasted for some years, and it was not until the reign of Ming-ti (A.D. 58–74) that any further attempt was made to subdue the outskirts of the empire. The famous General Pan-tsao was sent rather as an envoy than as a conqueror to explain to the various peoples what benefits would ensue if they came under the protection of China; but no very stable agreement was arrived at, and the ensuing years unfold a tale of alliance and separation oft repeated. Four hundred years later Wou-soun, Yu-tien, the Turkish Region, and Kuei-tze were still struggling among themselves, and no one power had won to dominance.

The strength of the Tang Dynasty led the northern lands to ask for the protection of China. A governor was appointed for the Northern Mongolian Region and two other governors were sent to the south, one to administer the area north of the Tien Shan and the other to subdue the lands beyond. But the control exercised was feeble owing to the appalling difficulties of communication, and towards the latter half of the Tang régime the inhabitants of Turfan gained the upper hand, only to be defeated in course of time by the Turks.

Later dynasties made more progress, and when the Mongols came to power in China under the rule of Ghenghis Khan, they swept westwards, carrying all before them, and succeeded in setting up strong administrations both to the north and to the south of the Celestial Mountains.

The Northern Government continued in power during the Ming Dynasty, but the Moslems soon regained control of the lands to the south. But revolt soon spread to the north, and the Emperor Kang-hsi went three times in person to re-establish his frontiers, and defeated both the Dzungarians and the Kasaks, extending his control to the city of Kuldja. Under his rule the rebellious Torgut Mongols, who had fled into Russia, returned to the protection of the Emperor, becoming Chinese subjects.

More than nine hundred officials are listed in the imperial records as having been sent to administer the many thousands of miles of territory now once more under Chinese control, and so efficient was the organization thus established that there was peace in Sinkiang for more than one hundred years.

Changar, the Kirghiz chieftain, attempted rebellion during this period, but despite his great personal courage the revolt was soon suppressed and never disturbed the central portions of the province.

The Manchu emperors retained control of Sinkiang until the time of the Taiping Rebellion (1850), which so completely tied their hands that the Tungans were aware of weakness in China and immediately broke into revolt. The notorious chieftain Chin Shan-ying spread fire and slaughter through the north and intrigued with a Mohammedan leader in Andizhan, the famous Yakub Beg, who at last raised the standard of rebellion throughout the whole province. The Tungans in Shansi, headed by Pei Yen-hu, also joined in the revolt, which assumed such alarming proportions and was attended by such terrible atrocities, that the Chinese Government decided on drastic measures.

They were fortunate in having under their orders one of the most able generals of which Chinese history has any record. Tso Chung-tang saw that only a carefully planned campaign could hope to succeed, and therefore he did not hasten to the west with an inadequate force, but built up an invincible army and slowly closed in upon the rebels. It was two years before he could cross the Gobi and the great hills, and the story of how he planted trees as landmarks for his return and sent an advance guard to cultivate land many miles ahead so that the main body of his troops might have no lack of food is an epic

of military achievement. He recaptured all the lost territory with the exception of Kuldja—to which the Russians now laid claim—and before he was recalled completely pacified the whole of Sinkiang, though it was not till 1882 that the country became officially recognized as a province of China.

In his report of his mission he states that there is no hope for peace in the west unless the whole area is not only brought under the Chinese control but thoroughly assimilated into the empire. He urges that independent customs shall be suppressed and that a uniform system of government shall be instituted, district magistrates being appointed in the same way as in the rest of China.

This was a tremendous task, and it was very far from completion at the time of the recall of Tso Chung-tang. His words remained, however, as the final pronouncement upon the western situation, and the ideal which he set forth has always been in the minds of succeeding governments, even though their resources were insufficient to accomplish it.

For my part I think that his policy of complete suppression of tribal traditions was far too severe, and events have since shown that it is not only impossible but unnecessary. He was writing at a time when a terrible rebellion had laid waste the lands and had resulted in the deaths of countless innocent and peaceful peasants. It was natural, therefore, that he should preach severity; but his proposals were far too sweeping to have any chance of accomplishment, and later opinion agrees that tribes can be brought under a stable system of government without the deliberate destruction of customs they hold dear and which are probably far better suited to them than the alien precision of Chinese rule.

For thirteen years the Russians held Kuldja, but it was at length returned to China. From that time until the coming of the Chinese Republic in 1912 there was steady penetration from the east, and district after district was peaceably opened to trade.

Then came the rule of the most famous governor of all, Yang Tseng-hsin, whose virtues I have already related. Owing to the internal disturbances with which the Peking Government was faced it was unable to contribute any subsidy to Sinkiang, and Yang had only his own resources on which to rely. Nevertheless, he gained complete control, quelling the

rebellion at Hami and breaking up the notorious secret society, Kao-lao-hui. He was next confronted by the invasion of the White Russians, fugitives from the Red Armies, but by masterly diplomacy he extricated himself from his perilous situation.

The reasons for his fall I have examined in a previous chapter. Although his seventeen years of rule were a triumph of justice, and so far as the common people were concerned there was no blot upon his record, nevertheless he was too autocratic to build firmly for the future, and though it is impossible not to admire his sense of duty, his exclusively personal standpoint and his policy of admitting no one to his confidence did much harm in the end.

His assassination at the hands of a disappointed faction led to the rule of Chin Shu-jen, a man probably not so black as he is sometimes painted, but quite unable to assume the mantle of the great Yang. For three uneasy years he struggled to maintain control, but he was unable to repress the rebellion at Hami (which was certainly brought about by the unwisdom of his decrees), nor could he control the region of Kashgar. By the time of his abdication and flight the condition of the province was terrible. Cold-blooded massacres of Chinese had taken place everywhere, and the rebels were at the very gates of Urumchi.

Of the struggles of the Maintenance Committee which took over government when Chin Shu-jen fled I have written at some length and I have given full credit to Commander Sheng for his military prowess, and to Governor Liu for his wisdom, which was the fruit of many years in the province; but their edicts were for the most part emergency measures taken without due thought for the future. In particular the currency was mismanaged; and the general tendency at this time was for autocratic rule. Liu unfortunately resigned from his office; Chu, his successor, died soon afterwards, advanced in years, and the present governor is Li Yung, a native of Sinkiang, a scholar-ruler of the old school. He was one of my colleagues on the Maintenance Committee.

The coming of Ma Chung-yin and the long struggle which ensued has been related in detail. Perhaps I am inclined, as who is not, to overestimate the importance of my own part in these matters. Nevertheless, subsequent thought has not

altered my belief that but for the ill-advised mission of Pacification Commissioner Hwang, I might have succeeded in persuading 'Big Horse' to be content with a bloodless sharing of Sinkiang. Then he would have brought the south under control, leaving Sheng to govern the north, and the two administrations might have existed side by side for the benefit of China. Certainly there would have been no insidious growth of Russian influence in the province, for Sheng would have had no need to seek aid from the Soviets—assistance which was timely and efficient, but for which he has since paid a heavy price.

It may be urged that Ma Chung-yin was at no time sincere in his desire for peace, and that he would have used South Sinkiang for the purpose of massing a new army to start once more upon a career of conquest. That is not necessarily true. He was no longer the 'Young Commander', ruthless and confident, planning to dominate the world. A series of defeats had taught him many bitter lessons, and given the good advice of some one whom he trusted he might have been content to rule the south in peace.

Following his final rout and his mysterious disappearance into Russia, Sheng managed to restore order in the province. The Government troops reached Ili and Kashgar, the East Turkistan Republic was defeated, and soon Sheng was in complete control. Administrative centres were set up at Urumchi, Tacheng, Kuldja, Altai, and Hami in the north; and in the south at Karashar, Ho-tien, Aksu, and Kashgar. No fewer than sixty districts were listed for systematic government by Chinese and Moslem officials, and the country settled down to lick its wounds and rebuild its trade, which, though it had miraculously managed to continue during the whole upheaval, had suffered grievous losses.

Thus is the history of Sinkiang brought down to present times. The past is there for us to learn from; but we are now concerned with the future. My own travels were little enough, and I cannot hope that my words will be accepted as a final authority upon the matters which I discuss. But throughout the whole period of war and rumours of war I kept my eyes on the peaceful future which I knew must come, and busied myself in steadily collecting information which might be of use to the government of my country.

To conclude my story, I want to state briefly what I learned during my stay in Sinkiang, and to suggest what measures must be taken to ensure for that ill-starred land a prosperous future.

Sinkiang is 1,200 miles from east to west and 1,000 miles north to south. It has an area of 600,000 square miles, which is one third of China proper, more than half as big again as Manchuria, and bigger than the British Isles, France, and Germany together.

Richly gifted with natural resources, with large areas of fertile land, to say nothing of gold, silver, coal and iron, and other minerals, nevertheless its population is only 2,500,000, an average of four people to a square mile.

It has belonged to China for hundreds of years but has rarely been well administered. The people are still living in their old and primitive ways; their condition is certainly no fault of theirs or of the country; it is entirely the fault of successive governments who have shown complete indifference to the western province. Sinkiang has been the refuge of outcasts. The Government, so long as it received regular tribute, was always content to let it alone.

The essential principles of any attempt to improve conditions in Sinkiang are, firstly, to strengthen the frontier, and, secondly, to place all races on an equal footing. When this has been effected, practical measures can be taken to develop the province. China is like a bankrupt family, so embarrassed financially that it can hardly continue to exist; but fortunately for them their ancestors have left them a huge estate in the west.

Millions of people now living in terribly overcrowded provinces could be transferred to Sinkiang. If things indeed come to the worst there is still this vast country to fall back on.

The opening of the air service of the Eurasian Company has completely changed the situation of Sinkiang. From Berlin to Shanghai the journey takes five days only, and I dare to predict that in future travellers from Europe to China will abandon the voyage through the Mediterranean and the land route across Siberia, making instead the journey by air. Important mails will also be conveyed by air, and the first Chinese city the Europeans will land in will be Urumchi

(Tihwa), which will have an importance equal to that of Shanghai or Hong Kong.

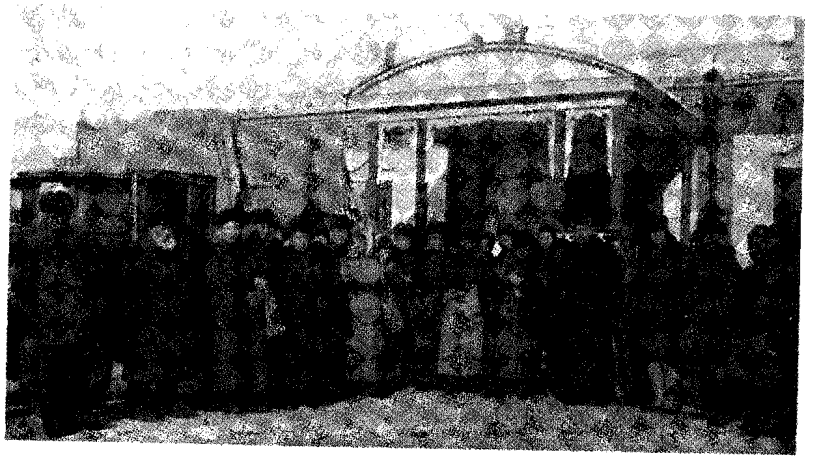
But there are at present no modern facilities and comforts worth mentioning in this backward city. In spring, when snow begins to thaw, all the streets are turned into mud pools, so that there is a joke in the East that Tihwa is the city where camels are drowned. These conditions mattered little when the city was merely a distant provincial capital, but to-day, when it has been turned into an important link on the line connecting east and west, the Chinese must do everything in their power to improve it.

The second line of communication to Sinkiang is the motor road to Sui-yuan. At present this journey can be made in thirteen days; but with only slight improvement in road conditions and the building of a few bridges the time can easily be shortened to eight days. Every kind of merchandise can be sent by this road, which will replace the Lan-chow highway, a route along which caravans still take two months to reach Sinkiang.

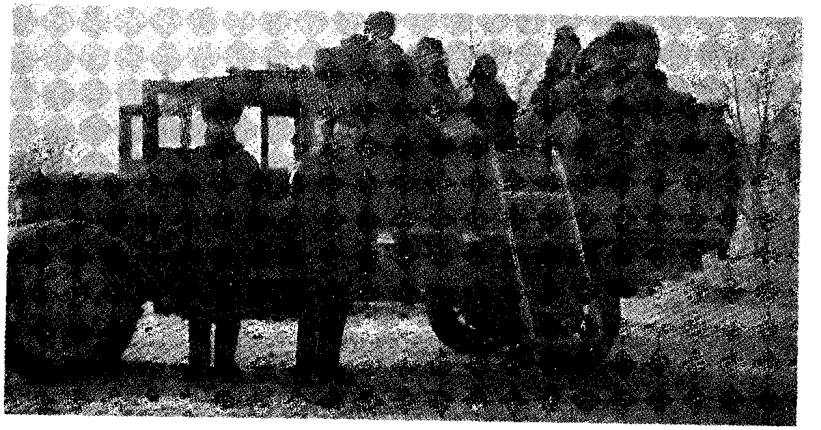
But the most important work to be done is the building of a railway. The Lunghai railway has already been extended to Sian, and we must do our best to extend the line to Urumchi and Kuldja. This work could be done, given the united efforts of the whole country, and to my mind it is a matter of the utmost importance.

To develop the border province, improvement of communications is vital, but this is not all; these measures must go hand in hand with the development of industry. The real wealth of Sinkiang is not in the old and shabby cities but in the rich pasture-lands and the regions of mineral treasure. The dirty cities to-day are of no use to a future and industrial Sinkiang. Therefore I am in favour of building new towns in areas where new industries are possible. We can change barren lands into populous cities, while as to the cities that exist to-day, it is well to let them perish. This is not an untried theory. It has been done with great success in Central Asia by the Russians, who have discarded their old Mohammedan cities and have built many a modern metropolis.

Cattle-breeding has been the biggest industry for centuries. If the people are asked about their wealth they reply by stating how many head of cattle they possess; and when guests arrive



LEAVING FOR URUMCHI:
OUR COVERED LORRY ON THE LEFT



ON THE ROAD NEAR URUMCHI

they first inquire after the health of the cattle. If the beasts are not well the guest will know it from the expression on the face of the host. The total number of sheep of the province is from twelve to eighteen millions; goats number 1,500,000 to 2,500,000; cows, 1,000,000; horses, 2,000,000; camels, 50,000 to 60,000; figures of such by-products as hides, camel and horse-hair, meat, oil, and milk are difficult to secure. The daily consumption of sheep is somewhere near 30,000. Cattle-breeders lack scientific knowledge, while the Government, who should supply it, care for nothing but the collection of more and more taxes. If measures could be taken to provide the people with expert advice on the prevention of plague, and veterinary matters in general, cattle-breeding in Sinkiang will certainly improve by leaps and bounds.

Disregarding mountains, marshes, and deserts the irrigable land of Sinkiang has a total area of 400,000 square miles, but according to the Government estimate there has been only 13,000,000 'mow' under cultivation. Counting 4,860 mow as one square mile then the land actually cultivated is only a little more than one-hundredth of that available. Further, owing to the lack of necessary fertilizers, land is given a rest of two or three years after it has been planted for one year. Therefore there is great scope for extended cultivation if the irrigation system is improved. There is almost no rain in South Sinkiang all the year round. Where there is rain it comes not more than once or twice a year. In the Han Dynasty, a certain district was even named the 'thunderless country'. The farmers do not know the relation of rain to soil; they simply conduct water to irrigate their lands. The problem of the land of Sinkiang is not lack of land but lack of water; the land without near-by water is considered as useless land.

Even the deepest wells in Sinkiang go dry in the months of spring. Water comes in torrents only when the snows melt in autumn. Though there are many rivers in Sinkiang flowing from north to south, the people can only till the land near the banks, and the more distant fields lie waste. Then there are lands on slopes overlooking rivers where the people, because they do not know how to conduct water upwards, can make no use of the stream. When that great statesman Lin Tsei-hsu was exiled to Sinkiang after the Opium War he started a

campaign to dig wells in Turfan, a district which has never known rain. Lin asked them to dig wells on hill-tops from which water was conducted downwards through ditches. Thus over huge areas the dry and useless land has been turned into fertile soil. Following the work of Lin Tsei-hsu, another statesman came to Sinkiang from Hunan. He also urged the people to dig ditches to conduct water, but at first he failed because the soil is of such a character that water leaks away before it arrives at the farm. Therefore Hwan, this great official, asked the people to use their old skins to line the ditches, which was done with excellent results. Even to the present day the people of Sinkiang honour these two great men with cherished memories.

Their work could be easily extended if we had the right men. Were the Government to start ditch-digging on a large scale and secure the co-operation of the people, then I have no doubt that the land hitherto laid waste will be transformed into fertile soil at one stroke. Some areas will present greater difficulties than others, but even the waste land of Sui-lai, Wu-su, and Kuldja, and the deserts on the banks of Tarim River, in Altai and in Hami can also be made cultivable if pumping systems are used.

The old saying goes: 'Possessing the people will give him the territory. Possessing the territory will give him its wealth. Possessing the wealth, he will have resources for expenditure.' The problem of Sinkiang is not land but people. Wealth can be found in land only and if there are people to work it. Therefore I favour the migration of surplus population to Sinkiang in large numbers, but before this is begun, measures must be taken to provide fertile land so that those who come will be able to start farming immediately without the need of support from the local government. This scheme will solve the population problem of the crowded eastern provinces.

So far I have dealt with only cattle and agriculture. But the greatest treasure of Sinkiang lies underground. Though cattle-breeding and land cultivation have both magnificent prospects, as sources of wealth they can in no way be compared with the mines. There is coal at Urumchi, Kuldja, and Kashgar; there are iron mines in Fu-yuan and Kashgar; gold in Altai, Tacheng, and Yu-tien; copper in Bai and Kuchai; petroleum in Sui-lai, Wu-su, and Sha-wan—to say nothing of

those deposits that are still hidden from our knowledge. Discoveries already made by surveyors are perhaps a very small percentage of what the province really possesses.

In theory, given adequate capital, coal and iron should be developed first; but the needs of the province demand gold immediately, to provide funds for other mining enterprises.

There are two kinds of gold mine in Sinkiang; the quartz mining and the placer mining. The latter is the easier method and therefore should be developed first. The ideal place to start is Altai, which has been known for centuries as the 'Golden Mountain of Mongolia'. There are thousands of gold-washers who conduct their business in the olden and primitive way, while the Government only look on, exacting nevertheless a substantial share. If dredgers were used the production would immediately be raised. At first the State could employ the workers already there and the Chinese workers who have returned from Russia. As for communications, the Trans-Siberian railway and the navigable rivers could be used for transport. In estimating the future of these gold mines I cannot but think of the Alaskan mines, which have turned a desert region into one of the most prosperous lands in the world. Sinkiang is like California before 1849, and Altai like Alaska before 1867, when it was in the hands of the Russians. If only we can develop the gold mines of Sinkiang then the gold of Altai will act as a magnet for the railway, the iron trail on which the future of the whole province depends.

The next important mineral wealth of Sinkiang is petroleum. The oil-bearing area is extensive. It runs from Sinkiang to Shensi in the north and to Szechuen in the south; in no less than ten districts oil has been discovered, of which fields Sui-lai, Wu-su, and Sha-wan are the most promising. The oil of Wu-su is perhaps the best in quality; there is also paraffin which will make excellent candles. Samples of oil and paraffin from Wu-su have been sent to Baku for analysis, which has given the very satisfactory estimate that out of a given quantity of natural oil more than sixty per cent by weight of pure petrol can be distilled, while the candles made of the paraffin are of much better quality than those the people used to make out of animal fats.

In 1909 the Government bought a distilling machine from

Russia, and the oil well at Wu-su was made more than seventy feet deep; the people also distilled oil by traditional methods, and there was a daily production of several thousand gallons. The Government used it for motor transport, and it proved to be of high quality for that purpose. While there was civil war in Russia the oil of Sinkiang was widely used, but afterwards Russian oil came in again, replacing the native oil after bitter competition.

The oil industry of Sinkiang will certainly be of great benefit both to the province and to the country. In the outskirts of Tihwa there has already been discovered the existence of natural gas. I remember when I was in Baku, I was impressed by the natural gas there with which the Persians lit their lamps in the Temple of the Fire-God. Most people were deeply impressed by the mystic fire. Little did they know that under the natural gas there lay large quantities of oil. To-day the forests of chimneys in Baku, exceeding ten thousand in number, speak most eloquently of the wealth an oil-field can yield. In 1934 Baku produced 40,000 tons of oil daily and Russia came next to America in world production of oil.

In Japan oil has become a grave problem. They are now trying by every means to increase either their oil manufacture or to increase their imports, for to a modern country oil is an indispensable source of power. We in China are building highways everywhere, but so far we have practically no oil production of any kind, and I am afraid that the greater the length of highways the poorer will our country become, because with increase of motor transport our wealth will be drained by the cost of importing oil. Therefore it is both natural and necessary that we should look for oil in our own domain. Were such abundance of oil as is ours to be found in other countries their governments would leave nothing undone to utilize it; but in China such matters are left in the hands of Nature.

Sinkiang, because it is the neighbour of Russia, can buy machines from abroad and have them imported by the Russian railways. It is far more easily reached by rail than Kansu and Szechuen. As to their further distribution in the province itself, this problem can be solved with the help of oil, which can be used to run motor transport and to produce electricity.

The coal-mining and other mining industries will be easily started; and light industries will follow on the heels of heavy industries. Oil is without doubt the key to the reconstruction and development of Sinkiang.

Let me now summarize my conclusions.

1. Future reforms in Sinkiang must be not piecemeal, but fundamental.

2. In carrying out a thorough construction of the province the interests of the different races must be respected, and there must be careful planning ahead. To start the various schemes subsidies must first be provided by means of bonds issued by the Central Government. Local financial resources should be sufficient for subsequent work.

3. Currency problems and the provision of trained men must be the concern of the Central Government.

4. Since it will take some time to complete the Lunghai railway and as the development of Sinkiang cannot wait until that railway is completed, the development of native industries must be started at once.

5. To avoid the financial crises in the province an exact budget for all political and military expenses is of the utmost importance. But the fundamental solution of the financial difficulties lies in the development of cattle-breeding, land cultivation, and the production of gold and oil.

6. As Sinkiang is of utmost importance to national defence, reliable maps must be made immediately by the method of aerial survey.

7. The air service between Urumchi and the East must be reopened immediately; the Sui-yuan highway must be improved, and the Sinkiang and Kansu motor road constructed. We must start work immediately in Sinkiang to save this vast province for, like a piece of natural jade, once polished and shown to the world, it will prove our most valuable possession.

It only remains for me to add a few words concerning recent happenings.

With the final defeat and flight of Ma Chung-yin, Commander Sheng rose to full power in the province. He still had many difficulties to contend with, however, and it was not for some while that he was able to exercise complete control.

The downfall of Ma Chung-yin was above all a triumph for the aeroplane. The Tungan troops were brave, and I have

heard several accounts of how bitterly they contested the mountain passes; but bombing stampeded their horses, constant machine-gunning from the air demoralized them, and often the raiders were able to drive them from the wells, which were constant targets. Several accounts speak of gas bombs being used, but of this I have no confirmation.

Why did the Soviets turn against Ma? It is not at first sight easy to supply an answer. Sheng was, of course, acting with the approval of Nanking. From the legal standpoint there could be no doubt that together with Liu he constituted rightful authority. But there were reasons of policy also which dictated the Soviet attitude to Sinkiang. In the period of intense economic activity through which Russia was passing ever-increasing trade was a vital necessity, and there could be no doubt that the trouble which Ma was causing was dislocating trade. Ma Chung-yin was not the sort of administrator with whom it would be easy to sign a binding agreement, and the Soviet agent at Tihwa had been impressed by the strong and systematic rule which had followed the *coup d'état*. It was quite probable that he recommended that the legal Government should be aided. We must be aware that without this timely aid, the province might still have been in terror, and many thousands of lives would have been involved.

Yet probably it was a further cause which clinched matters. The presence of Japanese advisers on Ma's staff lent colour to the persistent rumour that he was a tool in their hands. There was no truth in this, so far as I was able to observe. Men of the type of Ma Chung-yin are not easily made tools, and though Japan may have had 'observers' with his forces, they had probably little influence on the course of events. It indicates the lack of general political understanding which I noted in the 'Young Commander' that it never occurred to him that Russia might suspect a general who had Japanese advisers.

Following the final defeat of Ma, things quietened for a while in the capital. But Governor Liu was uneasy, and at length retired from office on the plea of ill health, to be followed by the Finance Minister Chu, an old man who did not survive a year. Li Yung, Tao-tai of Tihwa, my former colleague, then took the post of Governor, and there has been considerable progress under his régime.

The road from Tihwa to Kuldja has been reconstructed and

a fine motor track has been laid down from the capital to Tacheng. The road to the south is also being relaid as quickly as possible. The number of motor-cars to be seen in the capital has greatly increased. They are mostly of Russian type, though some are Fords. The streets of Tihwa have been greatly improved and there is now a fair sprinkling of modern buildings, the new yamen entrance being particularly fine. The city is now lighted with electricity and a fine power plant has been set up by a private company.

An attempt is being made to emancipate women, but this must of necessity be a slow progress. I myself played some part in the first moves, and it was at the meetings of the Relief Committee that women first spoke in public in the capital. But this problem is entirely bound up with the question of education, in which, I am glad to say, considerable progress has been made.

Chinese and Turkish newspapers are in circulation in Tacheng, Kuldja, and Kashgar. A Russian paper has also been established in Kuldja for the convenience of White Russians.

Schools have been opened, not only in Tihwa but in every part of the province, and there is a new university under the control of Tu Chung-yuan, a figure known throughout China. He owned a newspaper at the time and was accused and imprisoned for an insult to the Emperor of Japan.

One factor in the life of the province still defies reform. The currency system is still somewhat chaotic, while the present financial uncertainty makes it very difficult to deal with; means, however, have been found of trading despite currency troubles, and the coming of peace, which may be nearer than most people imagine, will see the whole matter righted.

Gold and oil are the main problems. The Chinese and Soviet engineers are still working on the oil-field at Wu-su, with what success is not yet known.

In 1937 there was a big 'purge' in Urumchi and more than two hundred officials were involved. The report issued to the outside world stated that a Japanese intrigue had been discovered, but this appears to have been in the highest degree unlikely. It was generally believed that the trouble was of old

standing, and that the Moslems of the south attempted to intrigue with members of the Government in the capital.

In connexion with the incidents of 1937 it is interesting to note that at about the time of the purge there was a rising in the south and the rebels advanced as far as Karashar. Following their dispersal, without much bloodshed, Liu-Pin, the garrison commander at Kashgar was recalled to the capital, his place being taken by Chang, an officer in the Manchurian army.

Following this trouble there was a determined attempt to oust Ma Ho-san from Khotan, and this was at last accomplished. Meanwhile, Yollbars Khan was also compelled to leave Hami, as he had for a long time dissented from the views of the capital, and at last he fled to Nanking.

The next phase was the rise of an 'anti-imperialist' movement in the south. This was directed principally against Great Britain, and was said to be stimulated by a neighbouring power that was anxious to get the whole trade of the province into its hands.

In March 1939 edicts were promulgated in the south which ordered all 'foreigners' to surrender their goods and leave the country. The 'foreigners' were without exception British Indians who had traded across the Himalayas for many years.

When the British Consul protested the consulate was boycotted and the Chinese servants who remained in its employ were assaulted in the bazaars.

Next came the news that couriers had been molested along the route to India, and on June 1st there came a report from Delhi that thirty-three British Indians including nine women and twelve children had arrived penniless and starving at Gilgit, having been forced to make the mountain journey in bad weather. They had been sent out of Sinkiang because of 'imperialist' activities, a statement which would be humorous were it not for the human tragedies which it embodies.

Apparently there had been continuous persecution, mob violence, and forced sale of property for all British Indians in Sinkiang, and the number who had come to Gilgit was the first batch of refugees.

A few days later it was announced that Major H. H. Johnson, British Consul-General at Kashgar, was leaving for Tihwa to discuss matters with the Government there. Since his

departure on July 11th there has been no official news of the progress of negotiations, but it is to be hoped that the utterly baseless persecutions will be ended. It has always been felt in Urumchi that the British aided the revolt in the south, and in particular they helped the Tungans against the Chinese. This is quite untrue, for no less an authority than Sir Eric Teichman has urged that it is in the best interests of all concerned for the Chinese to rule the province, since they are by far the best administrators. In his book, *Journey to Turkistan*, he quotes the following:

> 'British policy in Sinkiang, as in China, seeks only peace and trade; and is and always has been, patiently benevolent to Chinese rule in Turkistan. We regard it as in British interests that the new dominion should remain Chinese. Sinkiang has always in our experience been Chinese territory; we know and understand the Chinese as neighbours in the East; and any change would almost certainly bring some other Asiatic Power, Russia or Japan, up to the Indian North-West Frontier.'

The future importance of Sinkiang is perhaps best illustrated by the route of the new air service, which despite all the troubles in China now runs regularly once a week between Chungking and Moscow. The Chinese 'plane flies to Hami on the first day, and there a Soviet machine takes over, arriving at Alma Ata within twenty-four hours, and reaching Moscow within twelve hours, making a flight of three days in all.

Again, the province of Sinkiang has played an active part since the Sino-Japanese conflict. It is to be considered the rearguard of China's resistance. Obviously the Soviet material aid to China, including mostly aeroplanes, has been shipped and reached its destination through Sinkiang. Japan has always had a keen eye on Chinese Turkistan. She could reach South Sinkiang through Inner Mongolia. At present, Sinkiang is considered the only safe spot from Japanese bombing. Therefore Sinkiang is a place where Great Britain, Russia, and Japan have vital interests, and all three are watching carefully its evolution.

It would be difficult for 'kumonos' to replace 'turbans' owing to the great distance, but in view of the geographical

advantages, Russia has a better chance than any other nation, and that is why one can hardly deny that Soviet influence in Sinkiang is getting as strong as ever. The anti-imperialistic movement, though quite a new thing in Sinkiang, has nothing alarming about it, as it is the main principle of Communism. If communistic ideas spread into Chinese Turkistan, they will surely affect India. Therefore, British interests in India depend largely on the maintenance of Chinese integrity in the province of Sinkiang.

The Moslems or Uighurs in Sinkiang, being the overwhelming majority, are not only religious but also born traders. It is a moot question how far they will agree to the Soviet principle. As a matter of fact, the old generation is always conservative and stands on tradition, and this is especially true of the wealthier people. They must have witnessed and been surprised at the recent changes to which some of them had already fallen the victims. But the young students sent to study in Tashkent may take a different view from their old folk upon returning from Soviet territory, and this may have much to do with the future of Sinkiang. The wealthier class may disagree with the Soviet principle at heart, but the poorer or proletarian class is very likely to be in favour of it.

The future tendency of Sinkiang depends upon the will of the common people. Referring to past history, it is curious to note that when the Moslems were misgoverned by the Chinese they immediately allied themselves with the Tungans to fight the Chinese. But when chaos started the Moslems soon found out that the Tungans were no better than the Chinese because of their cruelty and love of slaughter, and they began to show their resentment by going over to the Chinese side and fighting the Tungans—their former allies. Such a happening saved the Chinese time and again, ending with the failure of the Tungans.

If the Chinese had ruled them justly, they would have got along very well for years, and trouble would only have started again through Chinese mis-government. It is rather ridiculous to say that an Islamic revolt in Sinkiang will happen every sixty years, though curiously enough the recent trouble was just about sixty years after that of Yakub Beg.

Since Sinkiang is entirely Chinese territory, its future lies in proper government by the Chinese and the co-operation of

the different races. Any serious international changes will affect Sinkiang as well.

I myself am always optimistic about the bright future of Sinkiang. As soon as the Eurasian Air Lines has resumed operation, all Europeans who want to visit the Orient will have an opportunity to see for themselves this wonderful country with its interesting races.

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